LETTERS TO YOUNG MEN
LACORDAIRE

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LETTERS TO
YOUNG MEN

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By

HENRI-DOMINIQUE LACORDAIRE

Of the Order of Friars Preachers

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Translated from the French

New Edition, Revised and Enlarged

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PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

THESE *Lettres à des Jeunes Gens* were first collected and edited by Lacordaire's friend and disciple, the Abbé Henri Perreyve, in 1862, the year following the writer's death. An English translation by the Rev. James Trenor was published by Richardson of Derby a year or two later. This has long been out of print in this country, although it has been reprinted in the United States of America. The present edition is based upon Father Trenor's version, but his rendering has been recast throughout, and the editor has added translations of many letters which Father Trenor passed over or which were not found in the early French editions. The autobiographical memoir at the end has also been added by the present editor.

The intrinsic value of these letters is apology enough for offering them once more to English readers; but many reasons concur in giving them special interest at the present moment. He who wrote them was born in 1802, and this year Catholic France has kept the centenary of his birth. The same year has robbed the Church in France of that freedom of teaching for which Lacordaire fought during the best years of his life. In view of recent events it is interesting to recall, after an interval of seventy years, what Montalembert describes as "the first scene in that great lawsuit which was only won twenty

years later"—when the Loi Falloux restored to the Catholics of France the right of bringing up their children according to their faith and conscience. In 1811, by a decree of Napoleon, all public teaching had been made the monopoly of the University. In 1831, about the time when the "Avenir" newspaper began its brilliant but intemperate campaign for the freedom of the Church in France, Lamennais and his young disciples resolved to open a Catholic school in defiance of the imperial decree, which still remained the law of France. They were indicted before the Chamber of Peers, whose verdict was against them on the point of law, and they were condemned to a small fine. It was then that Montalembert won his first forensic triumph. "The peers . . . . hardly breathed as they listened to that eloquence at once so youthful and so manly, so haughty yet so meek, so full at once of irony, of passion, of fire and of sound logic. The accused became the accuser . . . . the dock became a tribune; and all listened in religious silence to the youth who at one bound had taken his place among the first orators of France."* And Montalembert, silent as to his own triumph, bore a generous tribute to the magic eloquence of Lacordaire's speech for the defence, in which he claimed that by trampling under foot the imperial decree they had deserved well of their country's laws, had done a service to her freedom and to the future of a Christian people.

In a famous article in the "Avenir" Lacordaire once poured scorn on the sacrilegious tyranny of a puppet of Government—*une ombre*

* Chocarne, "Inner Life of Lacordaire," translated by A. T. Drane.

de proconsul! un simple sous-préfet!—who had insulted the Church of France and profaned her sanctuary by causing the corpse of one who had died excommunicate to be carried by armed force into a church before burial. What would have been the measure of his scorn for the action of a French minister who, by a mere secret circular, issued with no mandate from the nation, has violated the sacred rights of Christian parents and banished 150,000 of their children and 6,000 teachers from their schools! Would that Lacordaire were living now to lash into action by his voice and by his pen the halting spirit of French Catholics; to recall to the sense of his countrymen that Gospel of liberty which he loved so well; to remind them of the true meaning of those rights of man in the name of which the French Government wields a despotism worse than that of monarchy or empire, and which in France are inscribed at the very portals of the House of God, not as the seal of the Church's freedom, but as the brand of her servitude!

It is unnecessary to write here of Lacordaire's life and work, the more so as Miss Drane's excellent translation of Père Chocarne's "Inner Life" of the great Dominican—now in its ninth edition *—is within the reach of all. But there is a note of that life which over and over again receives expression in these letters, and about which a word of explanation may not be amiss. "May I die a penitent Catholic and an impenitent liberal," said Lacordaire in his reply to an address of congratulation on his election to the French Academy; and the words give the key

* London: R. and T. Washbourne. 1901.

to his life. But they are likely to be misunderstood if read apart from his life, especially at a time when liberal Catholicism is taken to indicate a tone or temper of mind which Lacordaire's own instincts would have abhorred.

He tells us in the memoir at the end of this volume that no sooner in his student-days did the din of politics clash upon his ear than he became a child of his age in love for liberty as he already was in his ignorance of God and His Gospel. He did not abandon his ideal of personal and political liberty on his conversion; but rather it was heightened and ennobled by the fuller light which faith shed upon his soul. Freedom did not, in his opinion, require any particular form of government; he saw that it might exist under monarchy as well as under a republic, whereas even democracy might become despotic. His own views rather favoured constitutional monarchy, and he expressed admiration for the British constitution. For himself, however, he aspired to the ideal of a priesthood "rising above all political parties, but sympathising with every need." Towards the struggles of oppressed nationalities, or what he conceived to be such, he gave generous and warmest sympathy; and he watched with lively interest the national movements in Poland and Ireland, and with mingled hopes and fears that of Italy also in its earlier stages. But he was able to distinguish between true liberty and the crimes committed in her name.

It was the liberty of the Church, however, which held the foremost place in Lacordaire's aspirations and public labours. He saw the condition of servitude to which she had been

reduced by the abuse of the Concordat on the part of a Government no longer Christian; and the chief mission of the "Avenir" was to rouse the clergy and Catholic laity of France to a sense of their degradation, so that they might shake off the fetters which bound them. His zeal for freedom of teaching was a corollary of his love for liberty in general, and especially for that of the Church.

Lacordaire found no antagonism between the service of liberty and a loyal devotion to the Holy See. When the intemperate language and untimely policy of the "Avenir" brought upon its promoters the criticism and hostility of a large part of the French hierarchy and clergy, it was Lacordaire who proposed that they should submit their principles to the judgement of Rome; and with Lamennais and Montalembert he hastened to the Eternal City to press for a decision. After long months of anxious waiting, their policy was condemned by Gregory's Encyclical of August 15, 1832. It was the occasion of Lamennais's fall; but Lacordaire's loyal submission made the corner-stone which gave strength and consistency to his great career. The principles which guided him are clearly shown in the letters in this collection which relate to his fallen leader:

"The [Church's] children never have any right, under whatever pretext, to stand aloof from what concerns her: they must take their part according to their position and capacity. . . . But their action must be accompanied by submission to the guidance of the Holy See. They must not seek to drive it their own way. No degree of talent, no services however great,

compensate for the harm done to the Church by separation of whatever kind, or by any action taken outside her bosom. I would rather throw myself into the sea with a millstone round my neck than foster hopes and ideas, or even support good works, apart from the Church."*

Of Lamennais himself, who in his pamphlet, "Les Affaires de Rome," had publicly scouted the condemnation of the Holy See, Lacordaire uttered the following terrible and prophetic words:

"The evil of M. de la Mennais's position lies not so much in his haughty character, in his faulty instinct in matters human and divine, as in his contempt for pontifical authority and for the grievous situation of the Holy See. He has blasphemed Rome in her misfortunes; it is the crime of Cham, the crime which, next to deicide, has been visited on earth by the most palpable and lasting punishment. Wo to him who troubles the Church! Wo to him who blasphemes the Apostles!"

May we Catholics in England, who are now fighting for the same advantages in the education of our children which are enjoyed by our fellow-countrymen, be inspired by Lacordaire's devotion to the same sacred cause; and may we, who know from happy experience that the spirit of loyalty is not maimed or stunted but is fostered by the fulness of civil liberty which we enjoy, keep in our hearts that loyalty to the Holy See which Lacordaire preached by the example of his life not less eloquently than by his voice and pen.

B. H. N.

London, October 19, 1902.

* Infra, p. 116.

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Letters to Young Men

I. God's Hour

Paris, May 11, 1824.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—All that I have to tell you might be said in very few words, and yet my heart tells me that I must write at some length. I am giving up the bar: we shall never meet there again. Our dreams of the last five years will never be realized. I am going to enter the seminary of St-Sulpice to-morrow morning. Only yesterday my mind was full of worldly fancies, although religion had already some share in my thoughts, while glory was still my day-dream. To-day my hopes are set higher, and I covet nothing here below save obscurity and peace. I am very much changed, and I assure you I cannot say how this has come about. When I look at the working of my mind during the last five years, at my starting-point, at the phases through which my mind has passed, and at the final result of this long and difficult journey, I am myself astounded, and feel impelled to adore the hand of God. All this, dear friend, is realized thoroughly by him alone who has passed through error to truth, who has the course of his previous ideas clearly marked in his mind, who sees the connection between them,

as well as the strangeness of their combinations and their gradual development, and who compares them one with another at the different stages of his conviction. It is a moment truly sublime when the last ray of light breaks in upon the soul, and marshals into a single group all the truths which lie there scattered and disconnected. So vast is the difference between the moment which follows and the moment which precedes it, between what we were before and what we thereupon become, that the word *grace* has been invented to convey the idea of this magic stroke, of this flash from on high. One may picture a man groping his way blindfold: the bandage is gradually withdrawn; he has a glimmering of the daylight, and the very moment the handkerchief falls, he stands face to face with the broad sunlight.

II. Farewell to the World

Seminary of Issy, June, 1824.

MY OLD AND DEAR COLLEAGUE,*—Just two or three lines in a hand-writing perhaps unfamiliar to you, but from one to whose person you never appeared indifferent. Quite lately I received from every quarter proofs of your kind remembrance, and of the interest you take in me. I am most glad that your friendship has not remained unacquainted with a step which in its motives and its results will have so great an influence upon my life. You saw me vacillating between error and truth, loving them equally because unable to distinguish

* Written to a young barrister.

the one from the other. The hour marked out by God for my enlightenment has come; He has shown me the powerlessness of reason and the necessity of faith.

Being thus drawn closer to you by my religious convictions, I have the happiness to find your counterpart in a brother whom I regret not having known sooner. I feel, too, that I am parting from you by giving up the profession which decides your future, and in which people say of you that you are older than your years; but if your success no longer urges me to emulation, if I no longer dream of the trophies of Miltiades in order to become a Themistocles, believe me, they will always be dear to me, and the news of your renown will always give me pleasure.

Adieu, my dear friend, don't ever lose sight of me; come sometimes in spirit into the wilderness. I embrace you with all my heart.

III. The Seminary of St-Sulpice. The Church and Progress

Seminary of Issy, 1825.

YOU would never guess one of my chief delights—it is to begin youth over again; I mean the age between childhood and youth, with the moral strength belonging to a more advanced age. At college we still have about us too much of the child; we cannot form a true estimate of men and things; our notions are too scanty to enable us to choose friends properly, and bind them to us by powerful ties. The higher stages of friendship are unknown to such weak souls, to such

undeveloped minds. And then in the world we are not in the position to form any very strong ties, whether it be that men do not live then in such intimacy, or that interest and self-love glide into what seems to be the purest friendship, or that the heart feels less at ease amid the noise and bustle of social life. Friendship has a better field among a hundred and forty young men who are constantly seeking one another, who have every tie in common, and who are nearly all like choice flowers transplanted into the wilderness. I take pleasure in making myself loved, in keeping up in the seminary something of the amenity of the world, some little of the polish of society. I am more simple, more communicative, more affable than I was; rid of that love of display which perhaps entered too largely into my character; not anxious about my future, with which I am satisfied, whatever it may be; and dreaming of poverty, as I used once to dream of wealth, I live at peace with my fellow-students and myself.

I am not afraid, as a believer, of losing those ideas of order, justice, strong and lawful liberty, which were my first conquests. Christianity is not a law of bondage; and if it respects the hand of God which sometimes raises up tyrants, it recognizes the limit at which obedience would degenerate into guilty cowardice. It has not forgotten that its children were free at a time when the world was groaning in fetters under a dynasty of brutal emperors, and that they had formed underground a society which spoke of humanity beneath the palace of Nero. Was it not the Church which introduced into our institutions a spirit of mildness and harmony un-

known to antiquity? It was religion which made modern Europe, by remaining unshaken amid the ruin of nations, by adapting itself to circumstances, to times and places, without ever yielding a jot from her steadfast principles. The Church spoke of reason and liberty at a time when those inalienable rights of mankind were threatened with common shipwreck. She preached faith and obedience when she saw mental and moral debauchery pave the way for a revolution which was to destroy liberty by anarchy, and reason by the very altars that were raised in its honour. How admirable is her wisdom, which can adapt itself to every requirement of civilization, which now quickens, now curbs the progress of the ages, in order to bring them or to keep them within that wise mean wherein are peace and truth, and from which human things deviate like the ebb and flow of a resistless tide! How marvellous is her strength in the variety of her action, and in the rigidness and endurance of her might and of her conscience, delivering nations from tyranny by freedom, from anarchy by authority, leading them to one and the same point from two opposite poles!

IV. Protestantism and Rationalism

Rome, January 10, 1837.

I GOT your letter very late, my dear friend. I thank you for all the tokens of confidence which it contains, and much wish to prove to you my appreciation of them. It is unfortunate that we cannot see one another for a short time, and chat together with open heart; letters are always

very cold and short when compared with conversation, and sometimes mutual pain may be given in them unintentionally. A look tells us what to unsay or explain, whereas, when a letter has been sent off, the writer is not on the spot to explain it to the friend who receives it.

I handled you rather roughly at first, because you did not seem to me child-like enough, and also because that is the best way of winning a soul which really wishes for guidance. You know that when postulants presented themselves at the gates of the old monasteries to give themselves to God, they often met with a reception calculated to repel them, so that the severity shown might prove whether the postulant's soul were already humble and equal to the practice of the virtues to which it aspired. We are too fond of being flattered, even by our friends; so I am glad you forgave me the roughness of my first embrace, and that you came back to me with the confidence of a good child.

Your picture of Germany does not much surprise me. By cutting herself off from Catholic unity she lost the very fountain-head of great ideas. Those districts which are still Catholic, whether under a Protestant government or still politically independent, catch something of the schismatical spirit with which they are in perpetual contact; and we may say that Protestantism is the prevailing note of the whole of Germany, her very life-blood. France, on the contrary, by remaining Catholic, has in spite of the frightful calamity of the last century raised herself to a position which is full indeed of difficulty, but will sooner or later show its strength.

Amongst those whom you name as the latest

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glories of Germany, there are at least two, Kant and Goethe, who have been evil geniuses. I grant that great intellectual sinners may bear honoured names, but their fame is of a kind which truly Christian hearts will not acknowledge. I should like you to get at once into the habit of despising reputations, however great, which have been won by misguided effort, and to value in a man's writings, no less than in his conduct, only what is good and true. To write is to act. Stubborn persistence in writing what is false is a crime deserving of the most shameful punishment, and its success does but increase the guilt. The Gospel of Jesus Christ changed the world. Whoever does not write in conformity with the Gospel is God's enemy and man's—much more so indeed than the frail creature who simply yields to his passions. The weakness of the sinner deserves compassion, but the pride which attacks truth inspires no kind feeling whatever.

As to Vico, of whom you also speak to me, his historical system, so far as I am acquainted with it, tends to destroy the certitude of facts and traditions. He turns into fables and allegories all events round which time has thrown a haze, and hence he is untrustworthy and dangerous.

Let me beg of you, my dear friend, not to be imposed upon by modern writings. Nearly all are tainted by pride, sensuality or scepticism, or by a spirit of prophecy remarkable only for the rashness of the dreamers who yield to it. Study the ancients closely. Even Pagans, such as Plato, Plutarch, Cicero and many more, are a thousand times better than the mass of our modern writers; they were religious men, full of

respect for tradition, who looked upon daily intercourse with the Godhead as the only means by which man could reach perfection. The others are more or less openly the enemies of Jesus Christ, that is of the sublime work which spread the spirit of penance and meekness over the earth. It is that which man's corrupt heart will never forgive Christianity; it is that which has plunged so many modern thinkers into impiety, whereas those of pagan times cherished so deep a reverence for religion. For the last three or four centuries literature has been in a state of revolt against truth. Even the good, weakened in their deepest convictions by contact with error, have put forward false or dangerous opinions in their best works. Therefore, my dear friend, you must use much discretion while reading. Read slowly and with reflection.

I shall be staying here some time longer; indeed, I do not know when I shall leave; if I knew that you were coming some day, it would give me a little more patience. I want to see and embrace you. Adieu, my dear friend; pray for me, love me a little, and be sure that I shall always be glad when you will open your heart to me.

V. Fragments of a Rule of Life

Rome, January 11, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I send you the rule of life I promised you. You are already so true a Christian that I need not beseech you to follow the rule I have marked out for you. It is already written at length in your heart, and I send it less

as a reminder of your resolutions than as a proof of the share you have in my thoughts.

Please be faithful in keeping up your affection for me, so necessary to my happiness. Mine is already given to you; it would be beyond my power to withdraw it, or even to weaken or lessen it. I shall ever regard you in my heart as my child and friend. God bless you.

Rule

SPEND a fair share of every day upon the serious occupations of your state, and look upon this work as one of your first duties and as your personal fulfilment of that sentence passed by God upon our first father: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread."

As to the lawful pleasures of the mind, the heart or the senses, indulge in them with gratitude and moderation, withdrawing from them sometimes in order to punish yourself, without waiting till you are forced to do so by necessity.

Bear constantly in mind that we have two great vices to beat down and destroy—pride and sensuality; and two great virtues to acquire—humility and penance.

Lift your heart to God from time to time, and think upon the sorrowful passion of our Lord, in order to neutralize by the contemplation of His mangled and bleeding body the involuntary impression made upon you by objects you are condemned to see.

Choose some poor person, and relieve him regularly according to your means, and look upon him as *Jesus Christ Himself;* visit him, talk to him, and, if you have the courage, kiss his clothes or his feet sometimes.

Fasten yourself in spirit to His cross, and hand yourself over to His executioner. To dwell upon the thought of chastisement and to undergo it mentally is a suffering in itself. The martyrs had offered themselves as victims a hundred times in their hearts before they were sacrificed in actual deed.

Think too how many of the down-trodden and of the poor scarcely get anything to eat save a little bad bread moistened with their tears and even with their blood.

Try to be good, amiable and simple in your bearing towards every one, and do not think that Christian life is cross-grained or melancholy. St Paul continually tells the faithful to rejoice. The true Christian is full of inward joy even in the midst of sufferings; he bears his cross good-humouredly; ill-treatment and disgrace do not affect his spirits; he offers up his body to whatever kicks and cuffs Providence may see fit to send him without losing his peace of mind; imprisonment, hunger, thirst, rags, fire, the scourge, the sword, death—in all these he finds matter for rejoicing. He loves and is loved—what more does he need?

VI. On Sadness

Rome, August 19, 1837.

My dear Friend,—You know how much I am attached to you. I am sorry to learn that you are sad and in low spirits. It is quite true that, humanly speaking, you have had a very unlucky year; but from another point of view you have reason for consolation. Be careful, my dear friend, not to give way to the spirit of melancholy,

which would gradually be your ruin, and all for no purpose. Religion is not a yoke of terror: she is all love and confidence to her true children. If our passions give us trouble, we must look upon them gently, as proofs of our frailty, but like children who are not frightened at their own littleness when they stand at their father's side. Melancholy is a passion we must fight down. I too know what it is. But the greater God's influence upon my soul became, the less hold had melancholy over me. I should be very much distressed to think that you were not happy and contented. Oh, my dear friend, do not give me the pain of knowing that you are unhappy. You have received so much from God that you can easily muster up courage to bear with your own failings and with the inevitable shortcomings of everything human. You are young, full of health, of good talents, good and amiable. If you knew what you really are, you would become proud and vain. If the lightning of truth struck you with her bolt, it was not for your ruin, but to lift you up, while doing away with your natural weaknesses.

I shall leave Rome, if possible, on September 15. It would give me great joy to meet you once again on Italian soil. Pray that this may come about, and give me the same hearty love that I have for you.

VII. Youth: the Gift of Lovingness

Metz, January 2, 1838.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I heard of you in a letter from your mother, which was sent to Rome and then came back to France. I read it with joy,

like a letter from a friend about whom one is uneasy. You have had a hard year's work, you have been ill, you have tended the sick, you have travelled alone, seen brilliant society; and I am told that through it all you have kept good, which gives me real pleasure. Tell me how old you are; I don't remember your ever having done so. Youth is a beautiful moment in life. As children we have not enough sense or enough knowledge of things: nothing is deep. In our prime we know too much, and no longer give so much pleasure; the heart has less calls upon it and is more wary, and neither gives nor receives so fully. But between twenty and thirty, what vigour, what fulness! We give love, and win it so quickly. I should like to know if you are affectionate, if you feel the value of another soul, if affection is the great feature of your character. Every man has one prevailing characteristic, round which the others gather. In some it is vanity, that chilling sentiment which makes people think of nothing but outward show, which loves to be surrounded by flatterers, to be gazed at. In others it is lust of power, a hard passion which would have all men slaves. The loving heart lives chiefly within itself, not in selfish isolation, but in that holy seclusion in which we need but one other object, the thought of whom is enough to fill up the day; in which we are heedless of the crowd and its views; in which the mere outside counts for nothing. That is the passion of all great and noble souls. I hope it may be yours; not that it is unattended by great dangers—for where are there not dangers?—but because once these dangers are passed we taste the only true consolation here below. True love

is pure; it is of the heart and not of the senses. The senses weaken and become cloyed; and no one is such a stranger to love as the rake. The cleaner the heart the more it is purified and ennobled by the love of God, and the more capable it becomes of giving true and generous love. I am sure, dear friend, that you will always remain in that pure and peaceful region in which fondness for creatures is hallowed by the love of God, and that you will not give way to unmanly affections, the end of which is an empty gratification of the senses, fleeting and bitter as smoke.

Just a word to tell you that I am at Metz, a strongly fortified and important town, where I am giving conferences upon religion. After Easter I shall go to Liège and Brussels for a few days, thence to Paris, and from there to a French Benedictine abbey to spend the summer. I hope to hear from you before then. I greet you tenderly, although so far away. Give my respectful compliments to your mother, and give me some share in the affection you bear her.

VIII. Lent

Metz, February 19, 1838.

LENT is at hand, and I owe it to my affection for you to give you some words of explanation about the season set aside for penance. You yourself asked me to do so, so that I am only obeying you.

Penance, as you are aware, is one of the chief virtues of the Christian. It consists of meekness of heart, which sees the enormity of our faults

and our natural corruption, and of bodily mortification, which both humbles the mind and curbs the bad passions which spring from the flesh.

If the Christian always practised penance really and bravely, he would be a saint. But the Christian is weak: he lives in the midst of the world, he leads like others a soft and easy, if not a sinful life. This is why the Church instituted, or rather received from apostolic tradition, a special time for penance. It is the period which precedes the time when we keep in mind the passion and resurrection of our Saviour. It consists of but forty days, whence the name "Quadragesima."

On Ash Wednesday the faithful repair to the church and kneel before the priest, who makes the sign of the cross on their foreheads with ashes, saying: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

Fasting is a penance laid upon the faithful for the whole of Lent with the exception of Sunday. Fasting, in the strictest sense of the term, means taking but one meal a day, after mid-day, and that of nothing very substantial—only of vegetables and fish. This penance, which is nothing out of the way, which the philosophers of old used to recommend to their followers, is very useful, because it weakens the body, curbs our intemperate nature, and makes us much fitter for prayer and meditation. By food man partakes of the lowest creatures—of the flesh and blood of beasts; by fasting he rises above bodily wants, and yields to them only in what is absolutely necessary.

Go to confession at the beginning of Lent as a preparation for it, and again shortly before

Easter, in order to fit you for communion the following day. At confession do not consider the man, but God, who so humbled Himself for your salvation as to die like an outcast and a felon. Doubtless it is a consolation to kneel at the feet of a priest one reveres and loves, but even should we not know him, we should see Jesus Christ in him, and acknowledge to ourselves that we have deserved public, and not merely secret, humiliation. Lay bear your soul to your confessor, do whatever penance he imposes on you without asking for any special one, and be persuaded that a well-spent Lent will be a very meritorious work of expiation.

Just think how incapable you are of great things, and don't despise little things.

IX. The Church

Abbey of Solesmes, June 24, 1838.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was expecting with some impatience to hear from you, for I too can no longer get on without you. Your letter just dropped in on the feast of my patron, St John the Baptist. I thanked God for having sent me so sweet a present on that day. Your letter is the reflection of all the good and amiable qualities God has given you, as well of a sound mind, which sees difficulties but is able to grasp them.

That is the shortest road to truth. Many minds see the *weakness* of truth; that comes from its vast disproportion to our faculties. A much smaller number see its *strong* side, which comes from the weaving together of all its threads. Truth is like a sheet of infinite size by which we

are borne in the air. Children that we are, we can neither measure it nor tear it.

The objection that troubles you is one touching the Unity of the Church. You have understood, my very dear friend, that unity is the mark of truth. Cicero understood and said so before you. The phrase which embodied that great man's remark is what most powerfully urged Queen Christina of Sweden to become a Catholic.

You will tell me that *unity of mind*, the most important of all, can only exist in the Church so far as the Church is infallible, and that Catholics themselves do not agree with regard to the *seat of infallibility* in the Church.

Were this the case, you would be right in maintaining that unity in the Catholic Church is impossible, since this infallibility, which is the groundwork of unity, is itself a subject of divisions. That however is not so, and I will give you a convincing proof of it: it is this—that as a matter of fact unity does exist in the Catholic Church, and that consequently Catholics know well and with certainty where infallibility resides. All know well, all believe, all are obliged to believe under pain of schism and heresy, that the *bishops in union with the Pope are infallible in matters of faith and morals.*

Outside this dogma each one is free to adopt his own opinion.* For you must remember, my

* In 1870—thirty-two years after the date of this letter—"the bishops, in union with the Pope," declared that the Roman Pontiff is infallible whenever, speaking *ex cathedrâ*, that is in fulfilment of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he declares of his supreme apostolic authority that a doctrine concerning faith or morals is to be held by the whole Church.

dear friend, that a vast number of questions are not yet defined by Catholic dogma, and are still matters for controversy. The Church, enlightened by the word of Jesus Christ, of the apostles and prophets, and assisted by the Holy Ghost, holds a certain number of necessary truths which she propounds and defends as the heritage of the human race. They are her treasure: they are the common treasure. Wo to him who lays hands upon them! As to the rest, which are more or less bound up with these necessary truths, they are matters of opinion. Thus with regard to infallibility the Church affirms as part of her creed that *the bishops in union with the Pope are infallible in matters of faith and morals.*

Beyond this truth there is a conflict of opinion. Some, like the Comte de Maistre, maintain that the Pope himself, *in his capacity of Pope*, speaking to the whole Church as her teacher, according to the duty of his office, is infallible; since otherwise, if he were able to teach error, it would be hard to see how the Holy See could be the foundation on which the Church is built. Others do not grant this consequence, and think that the decrees of the Sovereign Pontiff are only *irreformable* or infallible inasmuch as the bishops accept them either tacitly or expressly. This is a mere family discussion, which is no bar to unity, since all Catholics submit so soon as the bishops in union with the Pope *have spoken*. If you were to read our big theology books, my dear fellow, you would see these two kinds of ideas at every turn—those that are necessary, and those that are free. The former are a part of the Catholic creed, the others do not form part of it, although they

are not devoid of interest and are sometimes fraught with very grave consequences.

You will perhaps ask why God has left so many questions open to discussion. You might as well ask why God has not revealed everything. Now God has revealed principles in order to serve as foundations; He has in some measure left their consequences alone in order to give our liberty play, like a mother who holds her child up by leading strings but is delighted to see him try and walk like a man. You must bear in mind, too, that by virtue of infallibility ideas may at times pass from the realm of opinion to that of dogma, and consequently from the free to the necessary order. A simple decision of the Church works this change, and she never withholds that decision from the human race in case of need. Seated in the midst of minds, unchangeable like God whose Spirit she has, the Church spreads around her magic rays of light and heat, drawing to herself every soul of good will, judging human ideas by divine ideas, of which she is the depository of God, and binding together in admirable agreement the very differences of view which she allows to exist among her children.

Their liberty gives her no uneasiness, for she knows, on the one hand, the point at which she will check them, and on the other she is certain that they will stop at her bidding. She is untroubled even as God is untroubled at the restless ocean. On the other hand, Protestant liberty recognizes no bounds and is destructive of all unity. The Protestant has not a single dogma to serve for a centre of unity or for a a rallying point. His unity is himself; in other

words, it is something variable by its essence, like a cloud or a wave. Even his own individuality does not give unity; he is by himself, but not at one with himself. God is at one with Himself, but cannot be aloof from all else. So too with His Church.

We will hold over for our future conversations the different incidental points arising out of the chief objection which has suggested itself to you. Such details would take too long. Not that I am disinclined to talk at length with you, my dear friend; God knows it does not tire me, and that your frankness gives me great pleasure. But, as you say, everything must have an end, even that to which we are most inclined, and moreover I think you yourself will now be able to solve the secondary difficulties.

I come now to your misgivings touching the salvation of one who loved you so tenderly, and who on her death-bed uttered words so beautiful and so Christian that in great measure you owe to them your conversion to the Catholic faith. God has, like yourself, laid these words up in His heart, and to them I undoubtedly owe the happiness of knowing and loving you. Now, why should you fear that the Catholic Church should inspire afflicting thoughts touching the memory of your dear mother? God alone is Judge of men; He alone at the hour of death weighs their lives; He it is who puts into the scales what they knew and what they knew not, what they did and what they might have done, what He gave them and what He withheld, good and evil, difficulties insuperable, and, like a merciful Master, He fills up the measure of saving love for those who so loved as to be deserving of still greater love.

Possibly the grace which is urging you is but an overflow from that which was given to your mother when she prayed for you. Look upon her as the cause of your conversion. Be convinced you are fulfilling her last wish: "I feel sure that the memory of my tender love for my dear son will suffice to keep him virtuous and to make him cling to the Lord, who is the source of all grace and all virtue."

I might say much more. Do not think your long letters will tire me; they cannot be too long. Treat me just as you would an old friend of your own age. I have no misgiving about the objections which suggest themselves to your mind; I know too well the hold God has taken of your soul to look upon them as anything else but a course of gymnastics which you want to strengthen you in truth.

I think the conclusion of M. de Maistre's *Le Pape* will please you better than the opening, which is slightly too scholastic a controversy, and which is unsuited to your present state of mind. The worst of books is that there is not one which was written especially for us. The living word, uttered from a soul which understands ours, is much stronger. I am always uneasy when I recommend books, because there is hardly any book which will be precisely suited to any particular man. But one soul can read another in a moment, and give her what she needs. I therefore heartily long for the moment when we shall begin our chats once more. I shall be in Paris on July 18; I shall immediately closet myself with you, and by God's grace finish the work already begun.

Pray fervently, and read carefully every day,

and write me long letters. In your letters don't call me "My dear Sir," but "My dear Friend," for I am very fond of you. I not only allow, but I order you to treat me as your heart may suggest. Good-bye, my dear friend, for a little while.

X. The Eucharist and Grace

The Abbey, Solesmes, July 5, 1838.

WERE it not that I was already always with you, dear friend, your letter would have brought me to your side at once. I blamed myself for having left you so soon, before completing your instruction, and before God's work was finished in you. You must not lay at your own door the doubts, or rather the anxiety, which you feel with regard to the truths of faith, but rather to your ignorance concerning what the Church really teaches, or to your ignorance of the profound reasons on which her teaching is based. I will not scold you, therefore, but I will treat you like a dear child who has an earnest love for truth and is seeking for it with all his might.

You see, my dear friend, although God might at one stroke and in a moment lift up the soul to a far higher level, yet as a general rule Providence seldom allows so sudden a conversion from error to truth. Just as a man who for many long years has been wont to live under the degrading mastery of his senses cannot at once become so changed as never to feel his former passions return, so one whose mind has long been face to face with error, and who has taken a false view of things, cannot all at once take up an entirely fresh position. In spite of

himself, his eyes turn back to the country he is leaving. Truth dazzles him, and it is only with difficulty and with fear that he is able to grasp it. That is a natural result of the fresh direction he is taking. A tree that has long been bent cannot become straight all at once. Is it reasonable that God should give Himself wholly to you just at the moment that you would like? Rather, is it not reasonable that He should try you somewhat, first yielding Himself to you and then withdraw ing, that He should even show a certain mistrust of you? We are asking from God more than we should give our fellow men in our relations with them.

It is the teaching of the Church that penance is necessary for one that is returning to God, no matter how he became separated from Him, whether through sensuality or through pride. The natural man, on the other hand, so far from thinking of doing penance, deems that he is doing a favour to God when he returns to Him. He is astonished that God should seem so cold; he would like God to fall at his feet, as it were, and acknowledge His delight at a human creature's condescending to love and serve Him. You will say perhaps, my dear friend, that you have committed no great faults, that you were born in error, and that therefore God's bounty should be much greater towards you than if you had been stained with shameful deeds and wilful error. That is true. Still, you do not perhaps quite see the great place which pride has in you, your confidence in your own strength, the vanity which takes so many shapes and is so cunning in the way it deceives us. God is chastening you by the proof He is giving you of your own

weakness. He is pitting you against yourself, making you answer "Yes" and "No" to the same questions, and sifting your poor little mind to the bottom. But there! I am scolding you instead of fondling you. Please forgive me.

I will only say a little to-day on the doctrine of the Eucharist. I will merely appeal to your instincts. You believe that God loves men, that He so loved them as to die a most painful and shameful death for them; and that you can understand, because you yourself, a mortal man, endowed with the power of loving, are also capable of dying for those whom you love. Now, just as love is willing to give up life itself, so it seeks to cling to the object loved as closely as possible; presence is a need of love which cannot be overcome. Well now, do you, a being whose desires are finite, and yet who feel so keen a longing for the presence of those you love—do you think that God, who is infinite love, and whose desire is infinite, can yet be indifferent as to whether He is present with or absent from those whom He loves? True, He is present everywhere as God, but He loves you also as Man. It was as Man that He died and suffered for you; yet you cannot understand that He longs to draw near to that poor maimed body of yours, and to seek in your embraces, even though you crucified Him, the reward of His passion. If you had suffered pains and torments for a friend's sake, would you not long, before breathing your last, to press to your friend's bosom the mangled body which you had given to the executioner for love of him? Dear friend, there are not two different kinds of love; heavenly love and earthly love are the same, save that heavenly love is infinite. God

wishes to be present with men both body and soul, and since His will is at one with love's everlasting law, He can do so, for He can do whatever is true.

If you ask next how a body is present in so small a space and in every place at the same time; I will answer that we have not the most elementary notion of the essence of bodies, and that it is by no means certain that divisible extension is essential to bodies. The greatest philosophers have thought the contrary, and have believed that bodies are merely composed of indivisible atoms, joined by affinity which draws them together one to another; which atoms become extended by space which makes its way between them, causing intervals, so that the more a body is condensed, that is to say, the more one lessens the space which is enclosed by the atoms in proximity, the less room is occupied. So much for presence in a small space. As for presence everywhere, remember that light is a body, and that it travels at the rate of 75,000 leagues a second. What is there to prevent a a body which is joined to the Divine nature from travelling at a speed millions of millions of times greater, so as to reach every spot on the globe at the same moment? Besides, since the body is without extension, it is no longer subject to the law of space, and may be present in every spot, just as your soul is present in every part of your body, and just as God is indivisibly present at every point of the universe.

I turn now to the doctrine of predestination. Catholic teaching is as follows: God wishes to save all men, in spite of the sin of Adam, their common father. Jesus Christ died to save *all*

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men. God gives every adult sufficient grace to work out his salvation, and He has prepared graces even for children, much of which is made void through the fault of their parents, or from other reasons depending on human perversity. God dooms no one to damnation save after He has foreseen his failure to co-operate with grace, until the hour of his death.

Doubtless God does not give the same graces to every one, and that is what is meant by the inequality mentioned in Romans xi, from which you quote. Just as in the natural order God has set up different degrees of dignity among His creatures, so that one is a grain of sand, another a rose, another a beast of the field, another a man, another an angel, and all this without any greater or less merit on their part; so in the supernatural order God gave more to Jacob and much less to Esau, without greater or less merit on the part of either, yet without withholding from either what was needful for him, for He has called all men to life everlasting; and the Church's teaching, to which I referred above, is that all men receive from God sufficient grace to enable them to work out their salvation. You ask, why such arbitrary distinctions? St Paul himself gives us the answer: "Man, who art thou, that thou shouldst dispute with God? Does the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me so?" (Rom. ix, 20, 21.)

It is with grace as with nature. Tell me, my dear friend, what have you done that you should have been born of good family rather than of poor and mean parents—born free instead of in slavery, the child of some negress? What have you done that you should have been loved

and fondled from your cradle rather than ill-fed, ill-clad and ill-treated? Why are you not compelled to be working for an avaricious master, under a burning sun, dreading each day to be punished like a beast of burden? All these things some men have to bear without having deserved them by any fault of their own. But God, who is the source of life and its Master, distributes it in different degrees, allotting to each one a part which by his conduct he can better, bringing about through that very inequality a vast system of deeds and of lives, all related one with another, from which result the beauty and harmony of the universe. "If the whole body were the eye," says St Paul in another place, "where would be the hearing?" (1 Cor. xii, 16.) Egotists that we are, we never think of the universe, and would like our own selves to be the all-in-all.

But in the order of grace the ways of divine goodness are justified far otherwise than in the order of nature. Indeed, nature could not be justified save from the point of view of grace. It is because life on earth is only the beginning of life, only a time of trial, that it matters little what place—high or low, rich or poor—we fill here below. Poverty is a blessing even, for it makes salvation less hard. If grace is less plentiful for some than for others, those who receive it more abundantly are themselves given as a grace to their fellow men. We have not all been converted, as was St Paul on the road to Damascus; but we are all of us the richer from the teaching of St Paul and from his glorious death for the truth. Even so do the graces of individual persons become graces for mankind

at large, since all share in their example and in their good works. If, my dear friend, you become a fervent Catholic, as I trust you will, it will not be for your own sake merely, but for that of your family, your friends and many more, who, influenced by you, will themselves in turn influence others. And so the grace bestowed upon you shall flow onward to the ends of the earth all through the ages, even as the life of Adam flows through your own veins.

Another reason for the unequal distribution of grace springs from the different degrees of co-operation which our parents and ourselves have given to it. You will readily see that the child of a pious mother receives more grace than the child of a worldly mother, whose sole thoughts are vanity; for, the child being of the mother's own flesh and blood, God considers one within the other. You see also that the more you correspond with God's grace, the richer your soul will become; and if Esau even before his birth was less favoured by God, he afterwards gave occasion to God to show him even less favour by leading a life lower than the gifts with which God had endowed him.

You quote from St Paul words which seem very hard: "And if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction" (Rom. ix, 22); as though he meant that God is perfectly free to reprobate some in order to show His power, and to justify others to show His goodness. But the passage, if so understood, would be heretical, since the Church teaches that no one is reprobate save so far as God has prevision of his wilful sins. This, then,

is St Paul's meaning: Why do you complain if God, after having borne with the greatest patience the vessels who have deserved His wrath, should show in their regard His power and His justice? In short, no one is lost whose salvation was not desired by God; no one is lost whom God did not so love as to suffer and die for him; no one is lost save for having rejected God's love, which He showed in an infinite degree in the mystery of the cross.

I leave you now, dearest friend, begging you not to worry yourself too much and to take plenty of rest. We shall soon meet, and the thought of our meeting gives me joy every day, for I have great affection for you.

XI. A Conversion

Bologna, September 19, 1838.

I GOT your letter, my dear friend, just as I was leaving Rome; thus, the great fear I was in of not hearing from you before leaving was dispelled. Had I gone without hearing from you, it would have been a heavy penance from God. He did not so will, and I thank Him for it from the bottom of my heart. Although I have had a friend with me for the last few days, you cannot imagine the sadness that lays hold of me in having to leave a place where I have taken root, and go alone from inn to inn without ever meeting a familiar face or hearing a kindly word. I have often been tied down to a life of solitude for years together, and to-day I am really astonished how I managed it, loneliness is such a punishment to me! I got to Bologna yester-

day morning; it is a large and beautiful city. My only aim in visiting it was to visit the body of St Dominic, which is here. To-morrow I start for Milan, and almost at every step I whisper to myself that I am going to see you again. You fill the solitude of my cell, this little room, where I am waited on like a lord for my money, and where, when meals are over, I am left as lonely as an owl. I visit the churches. Many of them are very fine; but nothing so tires me as seeing too many fine things at once. Admiration is a feeling which oppresses, but does not move. Two hours of such walks as these sadden me terribly. And yet how much of it have I done in my life! St Dominic's tomb is of white marble, not in the present style, not colossal, in a church at the other end of the town, in a kind of waste ground.

There St Dominic breathed his last; numbers of Friars have dwelt there, and the greatest men from different quarters of the world have met there. To-day the monastery is all but deserted; the greater part of it is turned into a barracks where an Austrian regiment is quartered; the men drink, smoke and swear, where saints used to fast, pray and write. To-morrow I shall say Mass over the body of St Dominic, and I will pray God to keep you good and pious.

Your letter gladdened and touched me. I think you like me, for with me you drop your pride and tell me of your faults. Your friends were right to get angry with you. Nothing hurts a friend like want of confidence. What is friendship but the union of two souls? If there is no confidence, where is the union? The more important the movement which changed your

heart, the greater their right to know it, to advise you, to encourage, and even to check you.

You might possibly have had a few more struggles, but then the victory over death and error would have been more glorious, and less open to be misunderstood. I do not at all think that a natural liking for me was the cause of your conversion. Your coming to me shows clearly that you were converted even before seeing me. God had sent down upon you that secret flame which I so well know from my own experience and from that of many others; a flame of which the possessor is unconscious, and which awaits but a breath in order to consume the "old man" with his mean thoughts and the passions he believed so invincible.

When a man, especially a young man, comes to me for the first time, I can feel whether he is one of God's conquests; I can see the unction of the Christian in his features, his thoughts, his voice; and if with you I acted so boldly, so promptly and surely, it was because I *recognized* you. Had you met with souls, such as are sometimes to be met with, untouched by the grace of God, you would see that in the matter of conversion man is powerless; that a thousand lives laid down within an hour, and eloquence enough to make a statue weep, would avail nothing.

You must get used to having your actions misunderstood; every one sees them from his own point of view, in the light of his own ideas and feelings; our very friends, except those who bathe in the same divine waters as ourselves, do not always understand us. We must always excuse little shortcomings. God loves us tenderly,

although we are so frail, so vain, so prone to evil! He loves us because the little love we give Him in return touches Him, so mighty is a little love!

I saw two admirable young converts in Rome. France is big with wonders to-day. We cannot love her too well, nor too heartily despise those who wrong her.

In a few days I shall be at Dijon; you must address your letters there until further notice. For, my dear friend, we shall not meet until the end of October. Three months apart!

XII. La Quercia: An Expectant and Trustful Soul

La Quercia, April 16, 1839.

My dear Friend,—It is now a long time since we have heard from one another. I have made good progress. I am writing to you from a cell, with the Dominican habit on, and by God's grace I will never put it off again. I was clothed with it a week ago at Rome, in a chapel of the Dominican church called the *Minerva*, in presence of a few friends and of a fair number of Frenchmen. I should have been glad if you had been there to congratulate me. You would have seen a ceremony, simple it is true, but made admirable by the brotherhood which surrounded us. The next day we set out for Viterbo, a town in the States of the Church, about fifteen leagues from Rome. There are two convents of our Order there; one called *Gradi*, where St Dominic himself dwelt; the other called *La Quercia*, that is *La Chesnaie*. It got its name from an oak-forest, in which one

of the trees became sacred on account of a statue of the Blessed Virgin found in olden times among its boughs by an inhabitant of Viterbo. This man built on the spot a magnificent convent and a church, into the high altar of which is built the statue of the Blessed Virgin, with the trunk of the oak tree in which she appeared. Here it is that I am going to pass a year with my dear companions, who are now my brethren. It was thought the air of the place would agree with us better, and that we should be much more retired than at Rome, which is always full of strangers. The site is a marvellous one; we are quite happy here, and are already used to our new manner of living, which is not very rough. In 1836 I passed through Viterbo, and on entering by the Tuscan gate I saw on my left the door and belfry of La Quercia. I did not know its name, but I remarked it. I am now living there; it was destined to be my home contrary to all human prevision. Thus the future is completely hidden from us, and we unconsciously walk over the spot which will one day shelter us.

Your future, too, my dear friend, is hidden from me, but if my tears and my prayers will be of any avail, the light which once shone upon you for a little while will dawn once more. Do not give way to discouragement. Truth is ever able to win us over, however great the distance at which our mind may keep it. Perhaps, if I am destined to suffer much upon earth, your conversion will be given to me at one of those moments when we imagine that there is no more joy for us here below, until God grants us so deep a draught of it that we believe we never knew before what it was. So I hope one day to find you a Christian

once more, and to clasp you to my bosom with the twofold tenderness of a friend and a religious. Till that great joy comes, I will always carry you in my heart like a wounded but loving child, the latest fruit of my love on earth. I am now too old, in years if not in heart, to move younger spirits than myself. For the future I shall have to look backwards, and I leave you on the threshold of the past: as I glance back, you will be the first to meet my eyes. Do not forget me at this dear spot! When sad and dissatisfied with the world, cast a look from afar towards the window of my cell: think of a friend who used to love you so tenderly. God bless you.

XIII. Signs of the Times—The Writer's Task—The Rule of St Dominic

La Quercia, October 2, 1839.

VERY DEAR SIR,—My first thought is to congratulate you upon the position which your merit has won for one so well qualified for it.

I am truly happy to hear you are at Lyons, near your mother and your friends, attached to a church which has maintained unbroken the greatness of its faith. What you tell me of the change in the views of the clergy, and of many who had helped to mislead them, seems to me to accord with the movement of which there are signs everywhere. What do you think of the Archbishop of Toulouse asking the Duke of Orléans to his face for the liberty of teaching *promised by our fundamental institutions?* The Archbishop of Toulouse! The mover of the

censure upon the Abbé de la Mennais and his friends! One may exclaim with Joad:

> Was ever time in wonders richer?

We shall see many more yet. There is Don Carlos driven out of Spain, and Revolution mistress of the country, until the breath of the Lord shall pass over Spain as it did over France. Revolution will go the round of the world, as Mirabeau said; but with the Catholic Church in its wake.

You must know, my dear friend—for so I really regard you—that in a book printed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, if not earlier, touching the life of a certain Marina d'Escobar, it is said she had a vision in which she *saw England* returning to the faith and Spain falling away from it. The same holy woman prophesied that one day the two Orders of St Dominic and St Ignatius would be thoroughly reconciled and united.

I saw in the *Univers*, which we take in, that your book was being reprinted; I am very glad of this. You must not lay aside your pen. Writing is undoubtedly a hard task; but the press has become too powerful to allow you to leave your post. Let us write not for glory nor for immortality, but for Jesus Christ. Let us sacrifice ourselves to our pen. Even supposing nobody were to read us a hundred years hence, what matter? The drop of water is swallowed up by the sea, it is true; but still it helped to make up the river, and the river lives for ever. The man of his own time, says Schiller, is the man of all times. He has done his work; he has had a share in the creation of things which last for ever. How many books which to-day are lost in

our libraries contributed three hundred years ago to bring about the revolution which is now before our eyes! Our ancestors are unknown even to us, yet we owe our life to them. Besides, none of your published writings are of a kind to discourage you. Your style is nervous and brilliant, and is backed by sound learning. Let me beg you to work; if I had the direction of your conscience, I would make you do so.

The end of your letter, in which you tell me of your constant desire to consecrate yourself to God, touched me very much. I should be delighted to see you one day among us. I cannot exactly say where you could find our rule. I fancy a Paris bookseller would easily be able to get it for you. In any case you would have some trouble in making out from it how our Order is worked. A few words of explanation will help you to understand it better. Its object is *preaching* and *sacred learning*. The means are *prayer*, *mortification of the senses* and *study*. Our prayer consists of psalmody, or rather the recitation of the Canonical Office, which takes up about two hours and a half every day. We sing Compline only, except on great feasts, when we sing Tierce and Vespers as well. Our mortification consists in perpetual abstinence from flesh meat, and fasting *every Friday*, and from September 14 until Easter. But this mortification, being only a means to an end, may in case of need be dispensed with by the superior. The same may be said of our woollen shirt, if it becomes a real source of suffering. We have no extraordinary penances, and none are practised, save in the measure of the special need each one has for them, and by the advice of his director.

We have eight or nine hours' study daily; and in certain circumstances exemption from attendance in choir is granted: that gives more time for study. The regular novices, that is those who enter the order at the age of eighteen or twenty years, have ten years' study, live apart, and are only allowed the same freedom as the fathers on receiving the priesthood, even though they should not have finished their studies. We rise at five, and go to bed between nine and ten in the evening. As to government, it is entirely elective, and admirable in its freedom. Faults against the rule involve no sin, except so far as they be in *contempt of the rule*, or, what is very unusual, there be a precept *in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ*. Faults are punished by prostrations; formerly when grave they might be punished by the discipline given upon the shoulders in full chapter. The decline of the monastic spirit has almost done away with this custom.

These few words, my dear friend, will give you as clear an idea of our life as anyone can have who has not practised it. As soon as we have a noviciate, a week spent among us will teach you more about it than ten volumes would. For my part I am very happy under it: the only thing I regret is the absence of that vigour and sternness which we Frenchmen need. When we become monks, we really mean to be so from head to heel. Here our life is serious, spiritual, mortified even, and useful; yet one feels in a peaceful country, at any rate on the surface.*

* Some years after this letter was written, many reforms in the direction of vigour and sternness were introduced into Dominican observance by Father Lacordaire and by Father Jandel, one of his first companions, who became General of the Order of Friars Preachers.

XIV. The Dignity of a Christian

Nancy, January 20, 1843.

THANK you, my dear friend, for your kind remembrance of me, and for all the good things you tell me. I am very glad to see that you have taken so kindly to study and reflection; God has given you so much, you must become a profitable servant in His hands. If He really calls you to a harder and more perfect life than that of the world, He will make it clear to you; you have only to ask Him earnestly, and take care never to do anything which might deprive you of His light or weaken it.

In any case you can no longer live a coward's or a sluggard's life, with just enough faith to be afraid of losing your soul; in these days faith cannot exist without appreciation of the high dignity of a Christian and of his noble mission. We must each of us be willing to do our share towards the salvation of the world, towards the restoration of the Church in our own country, and to the salvation of this much harrassed land, which seems to be on the way to recover the place of its election.

I am very happy here, my dear friend. I have been very kindly received, and people come to listen to God's word. We are doing a little good; pray that it may spread and thrive. Good-bye, my dear friend; may God keep you. Let me always have a share in your affection.

XV. On the Conversion of a Soul from Protestantism to the Catholic Church

Nancy, August 14, 1863.

I SEE with great joy that God continues to support and enlighten you in the important work to which you have put your hand. You have reached that moment of your life from which your eternity hangs, according as you yield to or resist the grace of God which is impelling you. Once your choice is made, God will not abandon you if you choose Him; and if you do not yield, He will probably never knock so loudly at your soul again. It was chiefly for those who are situated as you are that Jesus Christ uttered those words which he addressed to Jerusalem: "If thou hadst but known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace; but now they are hidden from thee. For the day shall come when thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and beat thee flat to the ground, and shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

God has long been making your path easy for your return to the truth. He gave you pious friends, who were able to influence you by word and example; He tore out from your heart the veil of pride, which usually blinds heretics, and makes them more rebellious against divine light than savages and idolaters even, for they think they know, and their own attainments revolt against knowledge which must be taken

in with the simpleness of a child, according to our Lord's words, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You are no longer affected by this pride of heresy, if indeed you ever were; you know your own ignorance, your own weakness; you see how learning itself may lead us astray; you feel the need for an authority which shall teach you with certainty the laws and truths of revelation, and shall guide you in peace and union during this present life to peace and union in the life to come.

You see clearly that apart from authority there is only doubt and difference, and that even when separated sects proclaim your individual liberty, they thereby act as though by authority in your regard, adding self-contradiction to rebellion, by asking you to refuse obedience to the universal Church but to yield it to a particular Church. These things are as clear as day, yet they can only be seen by those whose eyes are opened by grace. Yours are!

All you want is perseverance in your enquiries into Catholic faith, and courage to humbly renounce your former errors. I feel sure you will do so, and that you will thus happily reach the goal where God awaits you. Pray to Him without ceasing that He may hasten that hour, cut asunder the last ties which keep you back, and make you a living member of the city of the saints and angels.

Nothing could give me more joy than to hear of your final triumph. I shall have had but a very small share in it; but whatever is done in Jesus Christ is common to us all, and we rejoice at it as at something which concerns our own selves.

XVI. Love and Vanity

My dear Friend,—God has given you a heavy share of this life's troubles; He has stricken you as though wilfully—not so much like a child whom He is punishing, but rather like a victim whom He is offering up in sacrifice; and yet you do not seem to see the attraction towards Himself with which He has blessed you. If He wants to have your whole soul, can we wonder that He deprives it of everything that can lead it elsewhere? The Gospel tells us He is a jealous God. Those embraces of which you dream; that sweet and lawful love which would overflow like balm from your stricken heart; those untold delights of pure affection of which some men are allowed just to taste—why should not your Lord be afraid that such things would keep you from loving Him alone? "We have been crushed, in order that we may be welded," M. de Maistre used to say of the nations of Europe. When God crushes us beneath His hand, is it not in order that our blood may mingle with His own, which He shed so long ago under blows yet harder and more humiliating than those which He deals to us? Is it not in the hope that we may seek no other face save the bleeding face of our Saviour, no eyes save His, no lips save His; that we may rest only in His arms, which were torn at the scourging; that we may kiss no hands and feet save His, which were pierced by nails for love of us; that we may tenderly touch no wound save His own divine wounds, which ever bleed afresh?

Ah, my dear friend, is love ever aught else than love? You complain that you are not loved; yet God gives you in the bottom of your heart love that is chaste, immeasurable and unfailing! You would like to mingle with it other love—profane love; and God, who maybe does not wish that, strikes you and wounds you; He reveals to you the hollowness of the world; He crucifies you, that you may the more love and follow the Crucified.

Most likely you will get my letter at some quiet spot, where there are other hearts that would have loved the creature with delight, but have sacrificed it to God. I do not know what special designs He may have in your regard. I only know that His design with all men is to be loved by them, and that His Providence directs all things to that end.

XVII. On the Alliance of Catholics in Defence of Religious Freedom

Nancy, June 16, 1844.

SIR,—I was just leaving for Grenoble when I got your letter telling me of your approaching marriage. That delayed my reply to your kind and friendly communication.

It was with much pleasure, Sir, that I learned from your own self of the event which now gives a fixed aim to your life, and makes you the more ready to carry out the good purposes which you have in mind. Neither opportunities nor means will be wanting to you, for the further we go the more open becomes the struggle between the

side of good and that of evil; and soon there will remain in Europe no issue but that of religion allied with that of true liberty. The sudden and unforeseen manner in which Catholics in France have rallied together is a strange sight, almost without precedent; at least there has been nothing of the kind since the League. A little while since we were either Gallicans or Ultramontanes, Cartesians or Lamennaisians, Legitimists or Juste-Milieu, friends or enemies of the principle of freedom; but to-day those names and the grave differences which they betokened seem to have vanished; the common peril has brought back all into the same camp; and even within my own personal experience I am continually finding proofs of that divine instinct which is once more drawing us together. A week ago I was preaching in Langres Cathedral at the request of the bishop, who had hitherto been much opposed to my attitude; and he added every possible grace to our reconciliation, even to paying me a compliment at the end in the presence of the whole congregation. Blessed be God for this movement; we must pray that it will last. Were it not for the strife kindled by Gallicanism and Jansenism, the eighteenth century would never have been what it was.

XVIII. To a Young Man on his Father's Death

Lyons, March 4, 1845.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thank you for having written to me to tell me of the grief which has come upon you. God has called to Himself him to whom you owe the present life, as well as the seed of the life to come: it is a great loss, one that leaves a great void! Happily, you had the consolation of seeing your father die in the sentiments and the practice of the faith; that is the greatest happiness he could give you, since he has thus given strong grounds of certainty for your future union with him, if you be yourself faithful to the example he has left you.

You are already a man in years; and now the place which the death of your father obliges you to fill gives you a second title to manhood. You have to support and comfort your mother, and must one day give her the joy of having brought up servants for God unto life everlasting.

XIX. A Specimen of Monkish Inveigling

Nancy, October 3, 1846.

I WILL tell you straightforwardly, my dear friend, my views with regard to the circumstances which again change your position. I do not think you can seriously entertain the idea of quitting the world and refusing the advantages offered to you.

Your duties to your family and your debt towards your friend are sacred ties. God seems to take pleasure in thwarting all your plans and in keeping you in the world. Even supposing you do not see His object in this, it would be difficult not to recognize in all these accidents a mark of His will, to which you must submit. You will perhaps serve Him better in the world than you would have done under the religious habit. It seems to me clear that you ought to accept the brilliant offers that are made you, and think seriously of making your way in the world, without troubling yourself any further about a plan in the way of which Providence throws so many obstacles.

Again let me tell you, my dear friend, how affectionately I regard you and how much I esteem you for clinging so long to a project which has been so frequently thwarted, and which has at last failed, notwithstanding our mutual desires. I trust you will not forget us, and, for my part, I shall be glad to see you whenever it is possible. Good-bye, then, for a little while.

XX. Obstacles in the way of a Vocation—Patience and Peace

Chalais, July 16, 1847.

You know, my dear child, what interest I take in your spiritual condition, and in the desire which you are cherishing. If I had been in any way able to help you through the difficulty, I should have done so long ago. But God is evidently holding us both fast, and we must sub-

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mit to His holy will until the end. We know neither His reasons nor His day; we simply know that He loves us and does all things for the sake of His chosen ones. Yesterday I got a letter from a young fellow who for many years has been prevented from entering the Dominican Order: now he is free. Very great difficulties yielded to his prayers.

It will be the same in your case, my dear child, in God's time. *Nescis modo, scies autem postea.* Live in quiet hope, ever mindful of the words of St Paul: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." Alas! I would give a great deal to be able to free you, but I cannot. I am very sorry for it.

Do your daily work. *Sufficit diei malitia sua,* said our Lord. What a beautiful and touching saying! How well suited to our necessity! Don't let us be troubled for the future: let us simply bear our burthen each day. I too used to be anxious and impatient; to-day I am no longer so. I peacefully await the will of my Lord, which I have always found to be good and lovable whenever I have been able to get at the secret of it.

You ask me for a book that will help you. I think that the *Guide* of Louis of Granada, a famous work of one of our fathers, would do you good. Read it slowly, so as to gather fruit from it. See by its light what you want, and endeavour to acquire it. When a man really knows how to read, very few books are enough for him.

I embrace you, my dear child, with all my heart.

XXI. Prayer---Penance---The Reading of the Scriptures

Paris, November 7, 1849.

YOUR letter shows me, my dear friend, that you have already made some progress—at least in openness and simplicity with regard to me. Long and continuous watchfulness over yourself, prayer, reading, meditation, the sacraments, works of penance and charity will alone enable you to root out whatever is bad in you, and above all your pride. Thus, for instance, you ought to be very watchful over yourself in recreation, in order to see whether it is the desire of giving others pleasure, or that of being conspicuous and of winning the appreciation of others, which actuates you.

Kindness in one's dealings with others is the great charm of life. A mind which is tactful towards others, which avoids everything calculated to give them pain, which is generous, which is not silent or reserved out of touchiness or pride, that mind is the mind of a Christian, and is the joy of every one who comes in contact with it. Make yourself loved, for virtue alone can win love.

With regard to your meditation, I think the best thing you can do is to listen attentively to what is read to you, and in it to seek for something upon which your mind can dwell. To contemplate truth, to apply it to oneself, and to embrace it as lovingly as one can—that is true mental prayer.

Don't let dryness discourage you. Sensible joy is a consolation, but duty done is the real source of all progress within.

Constant meditation, even if indifferently made, in the long run promotes increase of spiritual life. Even if one does not attain perfection, one at least forms a habit of its first degrees, namely reading and reflection. "Attend to reading," says St Paul (1 Tim. iv, 13).

Do not attempt any practices of penance which might be seen by others; not that we ought to be afraid of being taken for penitents, but because nothing extraordinary ought to be done before the eyes of every one, and also because we must not lay ourselves open to be thought holier than we really are. You can very easily practise certain outward penances which others will not notice—for instance, some slight mortification in your meals, prostrations in your room, and other things of the same kind.

During your recreations associate with those who are least agreeable to you; humbly beg pardon of those whom you have offended; privately offer up your body to God to be humbled and chastised in what way He will; think of our Lord's passion; reflect especially upon those parts of it which affect you most; do this particularly on Fridays.

It was meditation on our Lord's sufferings that made the saints; this it is which cures our pride, our lusts and all our vices whatever they be. If you meet some good young fellow towards whom you feel drawn, ask him to point out to you your faults and failings; but be careful not to form friendships which spring from the

heart alone and not from God, for it is difficult for the flesh not to be at the root of them.

Read daily with attention two chapters of Holy Scripture—one from the Old Testament, beginning with the first chapter of Genesis; the other from the New Testament, beginning with the first chapter of St Matthew.

Go down on your knees for a moment in order to prepare yourself for reading, and kiss your Bible affectionately at the beginning and end. You must get to esteem above everything else every word of that book, and to value other books only in so far as they approach it. After having thus read the whole Bible, you would do well to study chiefly the Psalms in the Old Testament and the Epistles of St Paul in the New. If you could learn those two parts by heart it would be of great profit to your soul.

I should not advise you to widen the circle of your philosophical studies, but, on the contrary, to narrow and concentrate them. Concentration alone gives strength. Learn to dwell upon a few lines of an author, even though an indifferent one. Nothing is of much use except what has been fertilized by meditation. A large range of reading dazzles the mind, and in the case of one with a good memory may dazzle others also, but it gives neither strength nor depth. Depth always implies breadth, but breadth does not imply depth. . . .

I recommend myself to your prayers, and embrace you tenderly in our Lord.

XXII. The Age of Preparation

Paris, March 25, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have left your kind letter long unanswered. My many engagements during Lent are the reason for this. But I do not want Lent to close without giving you some signs of life and a word of encouragement.

It seems to me that you are giving yourself too much trouble about the question of your vocation, and that you are looking for somewhat too mathematical proofs of it. That is not the way with God. God reveals Himself slowly, by repeated impressions which in the end powerfully influence the soul, and leave no doubt about its own yearnings. You are young and as yet unformed; so it is quite natural that you should experience a certain vacillation, especially when you look forward to the long years you still have to wait before you reach the priesthood. You must let days take their own course. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Years quickly run by when left to themselves. Besides, you must learn, and lay in stock for the rest of your life. I have always regretted not having had ten years sound theological study before entering upon active life. This all-absorbing life leaves you no time to repair the weakness of the foundations; it hurries you along without your being able to halt a single instant in order to seek the relief of some fresh study. You have scarcely time to read a paper and a book or two in which you are interested. So profit by

that happy period which separates you from the world and from active life, by diving deep into the fountain-head of divine learning. The waters seem at first cold and bitter; a day will come when you will look upon them as the most stimulating and the sweetest of drinks.

During Holy Week, from Monday morning until Saturday evening, give your time to meditating on the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Try to picture it to yourself in its smallest details. Apply it constantly to your own self, and never cease to offer up your body to God, to suffer all that Jesus Christ suffered. The saints say that there is nothing more pleasing to God, or more likely to form within us the spirit of faith and charity. Impose on yourself some little privation and penance, according to the measure of your strength. Sacrifice is very easy when we are with others, for we have so many opportunities of repressing our inclinations! The spiritual rod is always within our reach; and if we cannot chastise our body as it deserves, it is quite easy for us to chastise our soul.

God bless you, and pray for me, dear child in Jesus Christ.

XXIII. Prayer and Reading

Paris, June 10, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been in Paris for the last few days, and I return to-morrow to Flavigny, where I got your letter. It gave me real pleasure, because it showed me you were making progress in virtue. As charity is the most excellent of all virtues, your looking after

that sick young man and tending him as you would our Lord is a really good work. As to doing more, I do not think it advisable. He would probably not understand such acts of piety, and so they are better left alone.

You must not be astonished at the difficulty you find in mental prayer. The best thing you can do will be to read attentively every evening one or two verses of the Gospel, or of the Epistles of St Paul, and fix your mind upon them next day, making such acts of love, faith and contrition as come to your thoughts, and then to make every evening some good resolution, no matter how trifling. Lastly, you must beg of God unceasingly the grace to pray well.

I am grieved that your studies are not well managed. By reading as you do at random, without aim or order, you are losing valuable time, and what is more, you are getting yourself out of the way of real work, which is a great misfortune for the mind. Since the study of philosophy, as taught to you, is insufficient to fill up your time, take up the study of ecclesiastical history or of Holy Scripture. These are the theologian's indispensable groundwork. Buy a history of the Church; read it, pen in hand, so as to fix on your memory the dates and chief events. You will thereby be laying up treasure which will be lastingly useful, unless very carelessly gathered. But whatever you do, do it continually and perseveringly. I would rather you read nothing than read at hap-hazard.

Good-bye, my dear friend; pray for me, and continue to give me an account of your soul.

XXIV. Humility

Flavigny, July 29, 1850.

My dear Friend,—The consciousness of all the pride which is within you, and of the pain it gives to others, is a great step forward. There is nothing more hateful or hated than pride, when shown outwardly; hence, modesty is the first element of true politeness. The Christian must, however, aim higher. Even when modesty is genuine—that is, when it is the fruit of a real desire to please others—it is but a veil thrown over pride in order to keep it from the sight of those with whom we live. The Christian must be humble; and humility does not consist in hiding our talents and virtues, but in the clear knowledge of all that is wanting in us, in not being elated by what we have, seeing that it is a free gift of God, and that even with all His gifts we are still infinitely little. It is a remarkable fact that great virtue necessarily begets humility, and if great talent has not always the same effect, still it softens down a great deal of the uncouthness which clings inseparably to the pride of mediocrity. Real excellence and humility are consequently not incompatible one with the other; on the contrary, they are twin sisters. God, who is excellence itself, is without pride. He sees Himself as He is, without however despising what is not Himself; He is Himself, naturally and simply, with an affection for all His creatures, however humble. Kindness and humility are almost one and the same thing.

The kind-hearted naturally feel drawn to give themselves up to others, to sacrifice themselves, to make themselves little, and that is humility. Pride is more hated than any other vice, not only because it wounds our self-love, but because it shows a want of that virtue of kindness without which it is impossible to win love. Be therefore kind-hearted, and you will infallibly become humble. Your eyes, your lips, the features of your forehead will all begin to look differently, and you will find that you will be sought after quite as much as you were formerly shunned. But how become kind-hearted? Alas! first of all, by begging it earnestly and unceasingly of God, and then by striving always to seek others' pleasure and sacrifice our own to them. That is a long apprenticeship, but goodwill carries a man anywhere.

XXV. Mortification and Prayer

Paris, August 31, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am very well satisfied with all that you tell me about yourself and about your practices and good resolutions. I am afraid, however, that you are carrying fasting too far. Fasting is sometimes borne for some years, and in the end gradually breaks down the health. One o'clock in the afternoon seems to me a rather late hour for breaking your fast. But if you do not carry them to excess, you are quite right in giving yourself up to mortification and prayer; they are the two great sources of spiritual life, and strengthen one another. As you say, it is

in mortification that too many of those who are consecrated to God fall short. They live without bringing the body under, and the soul gets sluggish, even when it does not become the slave of the lower appetites. With regard to prayer, I should like you to recite the Psalter once a week, dividing it into seven parts, or at least once every fortnight, which would make ten psalms a day. This practice was much in vogue in the middle ages, and it is a very wholesome one; it a great pity that the faithful have given it up for prayers which very frequently are neither solid nor of any authority.

XXVI. On Education; Advice to a Young Tutor

Paris, December 10, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not wonder at your fears with regard to the task God has entrusted to you. It is a very great one. Nothing is more difficult than to train a child, and I am not sure whether in ordinary circumstances success is possible, so numerous are the obstacles which surround him in family life, however good his nature and disposition. In Fénelon you may read about the education of the Duke of Burgundy. Your pupil is not a prince, but he is a man, and there is not much difference between the two.

You will readily understand that I cannot give you a treatise on the matter; and even supposing I had time and space, I should yet lack experience, which in this matter, even more than

in others, is the great teacher. I have never had to educate any one, and I do not think I was educated myself, although I had the best and most perfect of mothers. Her position obliged her to send me to college when ten years old, and goodness knows that within the four walls of the college there was not the shadow of education, save military discipline and the boys' own fists. Religion, morals, politeness, all vanished one after the other, and all the good that remained in us came doubtless from the impressions left from childhood.

I had, it is true, from my eleventh until my fifteenth year a master who took great interest in me and did me many a good turn, but in the way of my studies rather than in any other. He won my confidence and affection, whilst my other masters inspired me with nothing but profound indifference, with a dash of chronic mutiny. So you see I cannot claim any very great experience in the matter of education.*

I think the chief thing is to love one's pupil —to love him in God, not with a soft and carnal, but with a true affection, which does not exclude firmness. The boy must dread giving pain to his master more than anything else, and learn to look for his reward in the satisfaction which he gives him. To do that the pupil must love his master—love him sincerely,—and it is hard to win such affection from one who knows nothing of life, who sees himself petted and fondled by everybody, and naturally learns to look upon his parents and masters as the ministers of his

* It is well-known what great talent Father Lacordaire displayed later on in managing the great schools he took in hand, especially that of Sorèze.

pleasures. Most children are brought up in frightful selfishness, brought about by the very affection which is shown them—an unruly affection, which becomes their slave, and fosters within them that terrible inclination of always thinking of themselves, without ever learning in their turn the pleasure of pleasing others. How can you avoid such a rock? How can you win love without developing selfishness in the child instead of inspiring him with genuine affection in return? At college, notwithstanding the drawbacks of public education, he at least has the advantage of having rivals, opponents and enemies; of having the truth told with a slap in the face, which is an admirable way of learning how little we are, and causes us duly to value that spontaneous friendship which some of our school-fellows show us. In the midst of one's family we have no means of serving so painful a 'prenticeship. The child has neither rivals nor enemies; nobody tells him unpleasant truths; he knows nothing of pain, since he never gets a blow from an unfriendly hand. He is a kind of mummy swathed in silken bands, and gets to believe himself a little god.

So the child must be punished when he does wrong; he must have little penances imposed upon him; his faults must be plainly laid bare before him; if necessary he must be sternly reproved; he must be exposed to slight trials in order to quicken his faculties, and to tiny perils, which will teach him courage; he must be made to ask pardon even of servants when he has offended them; from time to time he must be condemned to hard manual work, to prevent him from despising the lower kinds of

labour. There are many more details on which one might dwell. No opportunity should be lost of kindling within him that fire of sacrifice without which any man is mean, whatever his rank.

As for religion, care must be taken not to present it to him as simple devotion made up of pious and attractive ceremonies. That kind of religion is but a shadow, which vanishes at the first awakening of the passions. Solid instruction, including sacred history, Christian doctrine and moral teaching, is the foundation of all spiritual training.

A moderate amount of prayer, a little pious reading every day, love for the poor, occasional confession, and holy communion if possible after every confession, that love for Jesus Christ which springs from the knowledge of His life and death, slight mortification sometimes, and a few acts of outward humility—such seem to me to be a means which should ensure sound and lasting results. But everything depends upon the master, and a single moment may be of consequence. A single impression is enough to inflict upon a child's soul an incurable wound, or so to strengthen him in the way of virtue that he will never leave it without remorse.

XXVII. Gratitude for Good done in the Spiritual Order

Paris, December 11, 1850.

SIR,—The sentiments you convey in your letter afford me great consolation. For we can have no happier lot than to be instruments of God's grace in the souls of others. You are good enough to tell me that my conferences helped to bring back your soul into the path of truth, and that you still find them a source of good and pious desires. I rejoice at it, although God is everything, and His ministers are hardly even so much as the tool in His hands, which obeys the movement which He gives it. I rejoice at it, both for your sake and for my own: for yours, since you gain strength by reading those conferences; for myself, because you give me in return the help of your gratitude before God. God has constantly shielded me. I attribute His blessing to the prayers of those who, like you, Sir, remember me in their prayers to Him. Let me beg you to go on doing so, and be sure that you will thus repay me a hundredfold what little good I have done you.

On the Same Subject

I FELT real consolation, Sir, from what you tell me of the good I once did you. Those times are daily becoming more and more remote from me; the generation to which I announced the word of God is beginning to get old; and very soon it

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will only be in heaven, please God, that the memory of those meetings which you attended so constantly will live. Be kind enough, then, to pray for him who now and again found the way to your soul.

XXVIII. Obedience and Liberty—Advice touching Education

Paris, January 21, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not think you ought to deprive your pupil of all initiative, of all freedom of choice. We must avoid fostering in a young soul the spirit of servility no less than the spirit of independence, for both are opposed to the true Christian character as painted for us in the Gospel. A child who never deliberates and never chooses, who is passive in all he does, will never be good for anything but to submit cravenly to men and things set over him by chance; just as one who is brought up in independence will not submit even when he owes submission, and will not tolerate the honourable and wholly reasonable burden of lawful obedience. Such difficulties, indeed, crop up in everything; for man is constantly placed between two extremes. The ancients used to say, *In medio stat virtus.* Virtue has not shifted her quarters since then; she is still where Aristotle found her.

Now the question is how to bring a child up to the use of liberty without making him master; how to make him obedient without his becoming a servile? That is undoubtedly a delicate task. I have heard that children educated by the per-

sons of whom you speak are generally unenterprising, wanting in decision and boldness, and that they require to be constantly held in leading-strings. I cannot say whether this is true or not, since I have never had an opportunity of verifying the fact. Were it the case, their education would fail in an essential feature, and the result indicated would doubtless follow from the inculcation of habits that are too passive. A child must not command and be obeyed at every whim, like a spoilt child; but he is not therefore to be kept under like a slave, nor to be afraid of having an idea of his own.

XXIX. Pious Reading—Works of Penance

Paris, March 3, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is a pleasure to me to see how kindly you have taken to the task entrusted to you by God, although you would not have felt any natural liking for it, inasmuch as it is a work which called for a good deal of self-sacrifice, and put you in a kind of domestic relationship. Faith gave you another view of it: you attached yourself to that child as to a soul which came from God and was baptized in the blood of our Lord, and in which you might complete the work of mercy begun by its birth and baptism. It turns out that the acceptance of duty has been rewarded by secret joy of the heart, by that sweet consolation which God generally gives to those who serve Him in simpleness and meekness, without considering the littleness or great-

ness of one's position—greatness that is a mere delusion when measured by the world's standard and not by that of heaven. You may turn your position to admirable account in acquiring every Christian virtue. You have already made real progress, although there remain in you the roots of the old nature—pride, obstinacy and a worldly spirit. But you are getting on. Do not get frightened at your failure in meditation. Take a book—the Following of Christ, the Gospels, or the Epistles of St Paul: read a few lines, try to enter into their spirit; throw yourself at our Lord's feet as though He were present; kiss them with tenderness and humility, and ask Him to grant that you may find pleasure in His word only and in that of His saints.

You used to be very fond of worldly books; now let your affections be set upon the works of those who have followed our Lord and the Church. The others are nearly all tainted with ignorance, pride and false philosophy, and are covertly, if not openly, hostile to the truth. We always lose more than we gain from them, and we should only take them up when necessary, when we stand in absolute need of them in order to learn something which it is part of our duty to know. Besides, there are so many books that we cannot even read all those which are excellent; why then waste our time in perusing those which are spoilt by the spirit of falsehood?

With regard to penance, the state of your health does not allow of very much. But there are privations which amid the abundance in which you live may pass unnoticed, and acts of humility which do good to the soul without injuring the body. Practise this kind of mortifica-

tion abundantly. It gently sows in our hearts seed which shall grow like the mustard-seed. A little while since I came upon a letter of Fénelon's, in which he advises a great courtier, the Duc de Chevreuse, to prostrate himself sometimes in the privacy of his own room. Yet there is nothing to show that Fénelon was much in favour of outward acts of penance: he insists again and again on the pure disinterested love of God, and he is quite right. But the only path by which we may reach such love is that which our Lord showed us when He went from the Garden of Olives to the Pretorium and thence to Calvary. It was Love which took that road, and Love seems to have known the path which leads to itself.

XXX. The Society of Women

Paris, June 12, 1851.

TOUCHING your relations with the persons of whom you speak, I have nothing to say except that you should be extremely prudent, but without any affectation. Wherever there are women, there is danger for the heart. Avoid everything which you could not do in presence of others; that is the great rule, and by it duty and peace of mind are alike safeguarded. Avoid as far as possible conversations at which the whole family is not present: when they are all together, one is always safe. I am well aware that in your case nothing serious is to be feared, since you are in a house where all is honour and edification; but sometimes security itself is a peril, because the very innocence of all that surrounds us makes us less watchful over our hearts.

I quite understand, my dear friend, the difficulty you find in prayer and in your relations with God. A happy and comfortable life readily produces this listlessness of soul. We enjoy ourselves innocently, and yet little by little the spring gets weakened, prayer becomes irksome, self-denial is forgotten, we get into a neutral state as regards God, which robs us of the joys of conscious love. The only cure I can see for this is to give God certain regular moments daily, to bind oneself down to certain outward acts, which may withdraw us from time to time from our insensibility. If meditation is hard, spiritual reading might be able to rouse you. Lastly, my dear friend, whatever you do, let it be done earnestly and perseveringly.

XXXI. The Wings of Rest—The Weakness of the Heart

Paris, July 22, 1851.

I AM hesitating whether or not to write to you this evening. I have but half an hour to give you, and I should like to give you more; but I prefer sending you a line a day earlier to enjoying the pleasure of writing to you quietly and at my leisure. There you are then, far from us, in a quiet and delightful spot, like a spoilt child of God, whilst we are staying here in the heat and monotony of Paris! Just at your age I was starting for Switzerland, with my knapsack upon my back; and I thought myself the happiest of mortals. Since that time I have travelled a great deal, and the want of it does not now affect me. I

have bidden farewell to mountains, valleys, rivers, lonely woods, in order to form in my own room, between God and my soul, an horizon vaster than the world. Thus, however distant, you are still near me; in my happy moments, you form a special ornament of the spot in which I have gathered together all I love, and in vain you climb your mountains to escape me: escape is difficult from those to whom God has given the wings of rest. You will, perhaps, ask me what those wings are, but you have too much imagination not to know, and, I hope, they already carry you a little way.

Thank you for all the details you give me touching the good and bad side of your life. You can describe yourself openly by letter as well as in conversation, and that is a happy gift. I cannot get rid of my astonishment at the hold outward beauty has upon you, and of your powerlessness to shut your eyes. And yet it is so small a thing for a soul which has once seen and felt God! I heartily pity your weakness, and wonder at it as a great phenomenon to which I have not the key. Never, since I have known Jesus Christ has anything appeared to me beautiful enough to look upon with concupiscence, and especially with a concupiscence like yours, so deep, so thorough and so contented. Fortunately God has given you as a counterpoise a great faith and a love which is beginning to become tender. You know you promised me to go to confession every week, and to communion every week too, provided your confessor allows you. That is a *pacta conventa*, and you would be a traitor not to keep to it. In the spiritual as in human life perseverance is everything. If you return to

irregular and aimless habits, you will infallibly lose all the progress you have made.

Adieu, my dear child, my half-hour is up. I have still three Little Hours to say, then choir, then Vespers, then supper, then recreation, and then bed. Please remember that I love you sincerely and deeply, as my own child.

XXXII. Friendly Confidences

Paris, August 2, 1851.

I AM really grieved, my dear friend, at having given you pain by a remark in my last letter, in which I believe I told you I did not understand your fickleness in good and evil. Alas! I was wrong: everything in a man's passions is easy to understand. God has given you an ardent and generous nature, the grace of strong faith, an admirable appreciation of all the beauties of Christian life. But your senses, as yet imperfectly subdued, are waging a terrible war with you. What more simple? You have already made great strides in virtue, and you will make still greater; for God loves you, and you love Him. Never leave off fighting and hoping! The calmer days you have enjoyed since your stay in the country have given me real joy. I can fancy I am there with you. I climb your mountains, stroll along your valleys, sit down with you under a tree or at the foot of a rock, and we talk in peace of the beautiful things of God. To them alone must we cling; fortunately you are one of them, and I thank God for it with all my heart.

Since July 20 I have had rather a bad time. A sore throat, accompanied with a slight fever, came upon me two days before a sermon I was to have preached in the church of St Thomas of Aquin. Three or four days afterwards the fever disappeared; but I still had a heaviness in my head, a quantity of blood in the throat and nostrils, and all this accompanied by a general prostration and a kind of incapacity for work. As I am not used to illness, this indisposition brought on a fit of melancholy. All kinds of painful thoughts came into my mind, and at times I experienced a distaste for life such as I had never known before. It seemed to me as though I had nothing more to do here below, and as though God were warning me to get ready for my departure. This morning, whilst writing to you, I have got back my old spirits; is it you who revive me, or the homœopathic dose of aconite which my doctor has just made me take?

I really think it must be you, and also the feast of St Dominic, which is at hand. We shall keep it the day after to-morrow. The archbishop is coming to say mass in our church; he will then assist at sung mass, and afterwards breakfast with us and about twenty of our friends. There will be even more of us at Flavigny. The Bishop of Dijon has promised to officiate, and besides those we have invited, the railway will, as usual, bring us a great many unexpected visitors.

You know you have to spend a few days at Flavigny in the autumn, and, moreover, if you go to Italy for the winter, it will be on your road. I should like, too, to show you Chalais; Chalais means the Alps, pine-trees, torrents, distant

views, something quite worthy of an imagination like yours, a place you would like for its own sake, and which you would never forget.

I am deeply touched, my dear little child, at what you tell me of your attachment for the poor old monk. I should talk to you much more tenderly were I not past the age when the heart pours itself out without restraint. In spite of myself I weigh what I say, lest I should seem too simple and too loving. In heaven alone affection will no longer know the difference of age; there we shall have all eternity with one another without any feeling of constraint. Here below, twenty or five-and-twenty years make a lot of difference. It is true, I may call myself your father, and as such have the tenderest love for you.

Tell me when you are coming back, if soon, and by what route. Take great care of yourself, sleep, eat, drink, rest and walk—all in moderation. Just bear in mind that you have to waste three years in order to gain a lifetime. Besides, with the plans you have made, what does it matter? So make the sacrifice gaily to Aesculapius or Apollo—I don't remember which; above all, make the sacrifice to those who love you, myself included, and to God, who is the first and best of your friends.

A thousand kind greetings to your mountains, which are doing you good, to your climate, your woods, your waters, and to everything which is bringing you back to health. And as to yourself, my dear child, what more can I say than that you have just given me one of the most delightful mornings I have enjoyed for a long time? Here I am, quite young and lively again, but not

enough so as yet to allow me to show you my affection for you as I should like. But I do my best with God's good leave and your own. God bless you.

XXXIII. The Duties of a Citizen

Paris, December 11, 1851.

My dear Friend,—Yesterday a letter of yours was shown me which gave me pain and uneasiness. It did not seem to me Christian enough, or calm enough, or worthy of the lights God has given you, and of the designs with which He has inspired you for His glory and for your own sanctification. Even now your only object in this world is to prepare yourself to teach it the ways of Christianity, which, while planting justice here below, has also planted gentleness and peace. I therefore beg you, my little child, to be more staid and cautious in your way of thinking, so as to remain thoroughly master of yourself. It is likely that your life will be spent among public movements of many different kinds; you will not be an indifferent spectator, but you will take your part in them with courage, acting at every step in the measure of your strength and of your duty.

When a good citizen loves God and his country, he does all he can and attempts nothing more; he is prudent without being cowardly, and, since he is disinterested, he is seldom mistaken as to what his duty is.

This, my dear child, is the little scolding I wanted to give you. I say nothing to you about the warm weather you so much enjoy, be-

cause such things are trifles when compared with the events which are going on around us. But, whatever the season, I shall always be able to tell you of my affection for you, for you will always be worthy of it.

XXXIV. The Future of France and the Christian Spirit

Paris, January 3, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter of December 26 gave me very great joy. I am sorry that mine, which I wrote to you during the recent events, gave you some pain. I was naturally uneasy about the ardour of your age and your ideas. As for me, my age and my duty place me beyond the reach of the impetuosity which my affection made me fear in you. Man is doomed to undergo a host of evils. He cannot sacrifice himself usefully at the moment he would like; he must await the hour of Providence, avoiding all that might compromise conscience and honour, two possessions which must always be kept entire, for they belong to God Himself. How I should have liked to have had you by my side at that sad time, and to pour out my heart to you! But that was not God's will. He sent you far away a few days before, as though He wished to keep you out of danger, and was Himself afraid of the ardour of your youth and of your views.

The providence of God often takes such loving precautions in the case of those whom He specially loves. And who is there whom He does not love in that way? He sees us all as

though each one of us were alone in the world. That is a marvel of goodness of which we can form but a dim notion, even when we carefully study those little events which go to make up our inner and outward life, for God conceals Himself as far as possible; He is afraid we should see too much of Him, and that our liberty should be hurt at His loving interference.

It is to Him, my dear friend, that we must have recourse when beset by the troubles of this world, which become more evident the more we advance in life.

The French bourgeoisie, seeing what a gulf it had formed at its very feet by its unbelief and by the contempt of all religious freedom, has recoiled in fright, and has thrown its political creed into the fire; so that one is at a loss to see what it still has left save the instinct of material safety. God is inflicting just punishment upon it, and He is doubtless punishing it in order to enlighten it. For no country can live without an educated class, especially when the educated class is the only form of aristocracy which lives and thrives within it. So the bourgeoisie cannot perish; but they must reform, must lay aside that dreadful ignorance of the things of God in which they have lived for the last sixty years; they must lead the unlettered classes on to truth by the teaching of doctrine supported by the far stronger teaching of example.

That is why, my dear friend, all our efforts ought to be turned towards that end, for it is our only hope. Our country is ruined unless it turn back to religion. No doubt we shall have new movements set on foot, but they will

be in vain so long as our country shall keep its eyes closed to the light, which through Jesus Christ and the Gospel is being shed from eternity.

You are called, my child, to work for such a regeneration, and this thought ought to console you for everything, or at least give you strength to undergo everything. As for myself, I feel untold joy at the thought that for twenty-seven years, since the day of my first consecration to God, I have not uttered a word or written a sentence save with the object of communicating to France the spirit of life, and of doing so in a way in which she might receive it, that is to say with gentleness, moderation and patriotism. One day you will do the same. Prepare yourself for it by constant watchfulness over yourself and your passions. If a brighter day shall never again dawn upon our country, at least God's day shall shine upon our souls—upon your soul and upon mine, which God has joined in spite of the difference in our age; for it is a prerogative of divine love not to heed time.

XXXV. We must sanctify ourselves where we are, and not elsewhere

Ghent, January 26, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not think that you ought to leave your present post on the plea of coming to the seminary to die. Even were your health hopelessly gone, I should still fail to see any reasonable motive for such heroism. What good would you do at the seminary which

you might not do in the place where God has put you? Nothing keeps you from loving God, from praying to Him, from serving Him according to your strength, and perhaps at the seminary your union with Him would meet with still greater obstacles. We are ready to imagine that places can give us what we have not got: we cry out for a rule when we have not got one, and when we have one, we find it vexatious and useless. We are thus the plaything of our imagination. One man fancies that if he were transported to the mountains of Kolsim, in Egypt, in the midst of St Anthony's desert, he would become a saint; and if perchance God should bring his dream about, he would not be able to live there far away from men for more than a week, perhaps not for more than a day. So, my dear child, put away such vague notions of change. Stay where you are so long as you are wanted, and until your health receives the strength which you do not yet enjoy.

I write to you from Ghent, a town in Belgium, where we have a house. I came intending to to visit our convents in the northern provinces, namely, in Belgium, Holland, England and Ireland. They are provinces upon which we count for the general restoration of our order, and I thought it would be very useful to get an accurate knowledge of them, especially at a moment when are we thinking of holding our first provincial chapter in France.

I shall give no conferences this Lent. Our General wished that there should be none on account of the present state of politics, and I came round to his views. My position as the representative and restorer of an Order required

a prudence in my conduct which I must not overlook.

Good-bye, my dear child. Love our good God well; pray for me, and be persuaded that I shall always regard you with affection.

XXXVI. London---The Multitude of Pious Societies

Hinckley, March 7, 1852.

I ANSWER your letter, my dear friend, from England. Hinckley is a little town in Leicestershire, where we have a convent and a few fathers. I got here last night, after spending two days in London without seeing any one, so that I might examine at leisure the aspect of the town, which is large and very fine in parts, but seems to me inferior to Paris in many respects. Mere size, when it seems to pass all bounds, detracts from beauty; you get an endless collection of houses without harmony or any visible relationship; and when the houses are built in a cold straight line and all alike, as is the case in most parts of London, their immensity tires and oppresses, giving pleasure neither to body nor mind.

The fine part of London is fortunately confined to a quarter which is vast without being oppressive, and in which the palaces, the parks, the spacious streets, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and the Thames produce by their nearness to each other a very admirable effect. It will be a pleasure to me to revisit it on my return.

Nothing, my dear friend, stands in the way of your entering the Third Order; it will, I think, be a very good thing, and since the Curé of —— has faculties for such cases, you will do well to take advantage of them. As to the expiatory association of which you speak, and which seems to have spread rapidly, it is certainly a very pious confraternity; only I am a little afraid of it. To offer oneself to God, body and soul, in order to expiate the sins of the world is to expose oneself to great and painful sacrifices, in which we all take some part, it is true, but less fully when we do not ask God to give us a greater share than would fall to us by the general laws of His justice. For my own part, I should be afraid of going too far; my cross already seems to me at times heavy, and God grant I may bear it as He wishes! Still, it is possible that the very state of your health and the trials of your position render you desirous of bearing more; reflect upon it in God's sight, for I will not say either yes or no. The great number of confraternities already existing need not be a consideration. The world is wide. If only a thing is good for a certain number of souls, that is enough to enable them to put it in practice with fruit; we must never forget the beautiful words of St Paul, *Multiformis gratia Dei.*

God makes Himself all things to all men. In a way He adapts Himself to the caprices of souls, and association in Him, under whatever form, is always pleasing to Him.

I am glad at the news you give me of the state of your soul. Keep yourself in that great peace, giving yourself up wholly to our Lord; He alone knows what we need; He will guide

us better than any one else—far, far better than ourselves.

I embrace you affectionately. Pray for me.

XXXVII. England and Oxford University

Oxford, March 16, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—There on my table are your two letters, each of which in turn has brought me some consolation on my foreign pilgrimage: I now see that you are fond of me. Never give way to the idea that your letters or your visits are irksome to me, or that with regard to them you need consider anything more than the beatings of your own heart. You may be sure that mine will respond.

I got your letter yesterday, on my return to London, together with many more, which had been waiting for me ten days. I had spent the previous ten days in visiting very beautiful things: first of all, two of our monasteries, one at Hinckley, a little town in Leicestershire, the other in Leicester itself; then a country hall, in which I received hospitality; the Cistercian monastery of Mount St Bernard; Alton Towers, which belongs to Lord Shrewsbury; Cheadle church; a Passionist house not far from there; the town of Birmingham; and lastly, the Catholic college of St Mary's, Oscott. All this, which means but little to you, meant much to me, and taught me a great deal about the marvellous growth of the Catholic Church in England. You can form no idea of the magnificence of these establishments, of the beauty of their situation, or of the touching sight afforded by this resur-

rection of the works and arts of the faith on an heretical soil. This, you are told, is a church built by a convert clergyman; that monastery was built in the depths of the country by such and such a nobleman; that chapel upon the rock contains a picture of our Lord's Passion, and Protestants themselves go there to sing hymns; that cross is the first which for three centuries has been set up by the high road.

After ten days so spent I came by myself to Oxford, to rest quietly and write to those I love.

And what a sweet and lovely place this Oxford is! Picture to yourself, in a plain surrounded by low hills and watered by two rivers, a collection of ancient buildings, gothic and classical—churches, colleges, quadrangles and arcades—all scattered about in graceful profusion among quiet streets, which end in vistas of trees and meadows. All these old buildings, devoted to letters and learning, have their gates open; the stranger may walk in just as he would into his own house, for it is the resort of the beautiful for all those who appreciate it. You cross silent quadrangles, meeting here and there young men wearing cap and gown; no crowd, no noise; there is something venerable in the atmosphere no less than in the walls darkened by age, for here nothing seems to be repaired for fear of committing a crime against antiquity. And still the most exquisite cleanness is visible from top to bottom of the ancient buildings. I have never seen such well preserved monuments with such a beautiful air of decay. In Italy the buildings look young; here age is seen, but without dilapidation, simply in its majesty.

The city is small, yet it does not seem to be

wanting in size; the many venerable old buildings take the place of houses, and give it a look of vastness. How my heart turned to you as I walked alone among those young men of your own age! Not one of them knew or cared for me: I was to them as though I did not exist, and more than once tears started into my eyes at the thought that elsewhere I should have met such friendly looks.

In parts London is magnificent; but everywhere else there reigns a huge, dull sameness; the air is laden with smoke, and its vastness robs it of the grace of a well-finished thing. The inhabitants, although quick in their movements, but ill conceal a great deal of unhappiness; nothing seems so great as this people in its institutions, nothing so puny as when you watch their faces in the streets.

I shall not go to Ireland; I have reasons for shortening my exile. I intend returning to the Continent on the 22nd of this month, and going to our convent of Chalais by the Rhine and Strasbourg. There I shall spend Easter, and probably one or two months, if not the whole summer. What joy it would give me to see you on your return to Paris! Could you not come back by the Rhone and Saône? The railway makes that route very easy and quick. Still, take care not to disappoint your family by asking leave to go that way. The more they love you, the more anxious they will be if you seem not to be keen about seeing them again as soon as you can.

You must not be surprised at finding yourself overmatched by your doctor. It takes twenty years to make a good controversialist. As to his

opinion about the impossibility of being chaste, it is upset by the experience of a multitude of men who live so out of sheer love of God, and who find in their sacrifice a flood of tender joys in which they never think of regretting the fleeting and painful intoxication of the senses. Physicians think they know man; they only know the corruptible part of him. When people have not taken the pains to overcome their passions, and when the joys of chastity have never been revealed to them, they console themselves in their vices by declaring them necessary, and cloak the testimony of a corrupt heart with the name of science. Do not be down-hearted at the slender success of your controversies; you are still too young to handle the weapons of truth; some day you will do so successfully, if you go on wishing to be useful to God and your fellows.

I am glad to think that we shall soon be drawing nearer to one another, and that we may meet and shake hands—you from the Pyrenees, I from the Alps.

XXXVIII. Advice to a Friend—Perils and Hopes

Flavigny, April 22, 1852.

ACCORDING to my calculations, my dear friend, you ought to be at home now, since you told me on the first of this month that you were going to start back northwards. Perhaps I ought to have given an earlier date for your return; but you are such a hand at stopping on the way—for instance, at Biarritz—to enjoy the things you like, that it is excusable to suppose you took

three weeks in getting from Bayonne to Paris, just as in the good old times of our fathers. So you are back at last, but still far away from me, and you hold out very little hope of my seeing you before next vacation! If I were abroad, it would be still worse. So I must console myself with the thought that you are only eight hours distant, in the country which we both love, and must wait patiently for you. Only please remember now and then that your coming here will make me really happy, and in the meantime give me news of your arrival and of your health.

Tell me whether your wanderings and the warm air of the Pyrenees have given you that full and comfortable feeling which is the greatest sign of real health. Is your breathing quite free? Can you go up and down stairs without any difficulty? Are you satisfied with yourself, soul and body?

As for myself, I am nearing the hour which will tell me I am fifty. I was born on May 12, 1802. There's a great anniversary for you! I am already seven years older than my father was when he died. He never reached forty-five. Poor little life! At my father's rate I ought to have been dead seven years ago; and ten years hence, if God grant them to me, I shall be an old man. However, I am ready to die; I have done what I wanted here below, and the rest of my life is good for nothing except to lend the authority of age to the past. You, on the other hand, my dear friend, are coming forward. I hope to see you such as you promise to be—a useful, honourable and distinguished man. You will have certain snares to avoid; there is something in your soul which may lead you into many mistakes; but

they will, I trust, be generous faults of that kind which God forgives, and which He most likes—so dear is generosity to Him.

Within the last four years I have seen much that has disappointed me with men; you remain to me as a pure ideal of the future, as a hope. But you must know how to be moderate in order to be constant. Impetuosity and exaggeration often lead to sudden changes which surprise everybody, whilst moderation in opinions and in actions easily holds the ground it has chosen. Above everything be kind; for it is kindness which makes us most like God, and which most disarms our fellow-men. You have traces of it your soul, but they are furrows which we cannot sufficiently deepen. Your lips and eyes are not yet so kindly as they might be, and no art but the fostering of kindness within can give them that expression. A kind and sweet thoughtfulness for others by degrees stamps itself upon the countenance, and gives it an expression which wins all hearts. I have never felt any affection but for kindness shown in the features of the face. Whoever is without it leaves me cold—even features which indicate genius; but the first comer who looks kind, touches and wins me.

Since, then, you must be kind, you will come and see me in this dear peaceful spot, among all my children. We are twenty-four at table; tomorrow we shall be twenty-seven. This is the first time we have had so big a family in a single house. But we are also going to hold our first provincial chapter, after thirteen years at the work of restoring our Order in France. We have had more novices that usual, amongst others an

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attaché of one of the embassies, who has been round the world, and who came to us from Syria, got up in oriental dress. He made a big sensation at Flavigny, so much so that it was almost believed that we had converted the Grand Turk. When you come, my dear child, no one will take you for the Grand Turk, but we shall all take you for a good and amiable Frenchman. So come. Perhaps I am destined to pass here, not far from my birth-place and from the town where I spent my childhood, many long years—the last of my whole life. Your own image and the memory of you must not be absent. I summon you to my retreat, just as St Basil used to summon his friends to the monastery of Pontus, whither he went to seek a peaceful old age. You will not find St Basil, but a soul who loves you, who has often told you so, and is never tired of doing so.

God bless you; do not forget to remember me to your dear S. I am sorry I can see him no longer with a few other little penitents who used to comfort me.

XXXIX. Moderation in Work—Flavigny

Flavigny, May 31, 1852.

I DID not want to scold you for the sore throat you caught through your own fault, and which has now quite gone; but I will scold you for the doubts these little accidents give you about your vocation. If you had seen me at your own age, you would never have thought I could live. I was thin and pale; my colour came and went at every turn; I could not walk for a quarter of an hour in the streets of Paris without feeling ex-

treme and painful fatigue: and yet to-day no one can have sounder or brisker health. Time and quiet living have strengthened me all through—head, chest, muscles. It will be the same with you, if you do not keep late hours and are careful not to work too hard. I say nothing more, because you are a good pious young fellow, and you only have to beware of overtaxing your mind. Two of my friends—one at fifty, the other at forty—have become ill through reckless overstudy. Don't you do the same. Give Father Time his rightful due, and whatever he will not let us rob him of without making us smart for it. What use would it have been to me to-day if I had half-killed myself for the sake of doing things quickly? Go to work quietly, and be sure that your throat and everything else will become the humble servants of your good will. Besides, my dear friend, however precious health may be, it is not Hercules who does most of the work: a generous soul in a poor little body is mistress of the world.

I am making great preparations for your coming. We have at Flavigny a little wood at the foot of a long terrace, formerly the rampart of the town; part of the wood used to run along the high road without any kind of fence. We have now had the boundary, which consists of very hard and rather high rocks, cut sheer, and by means of a little masonry in the gaps we have succeeded in shutting ourselves up within our own grounds. We have also made paths through the wood, and everything has become quite fit for you to see, and very keen to see you.

Rough stone seats have been put here and

there, but in the shade, under the rocks, so that you may sit down there when you are tired, and meditate quietly in the gentle scented breezes which pass through our trees. I am finishing the house to the best of my power, but in plain and simple style. It is a matter of a few days' work only for the men here, who are very glad of what jobs we give them. Every landlord should give work according to the measure of his wealth, and religious are more strictly bound to do this than others, because they ought to be more charitable. We find the hearts of the poor richer than their pockets.

I wish you a happy Whitsuntide; may God make you meek and humble, and may He keep for me the place I have in your heart, which also you have in mine.

XL. On the Ways of Providence

Flavigny, June 3, 1852.

THE very day you were writing to me, my dear friend, I was obeying the same impulse; and you must have got my letter at the same time that your own came to console me. I am afraid, however, it may have failed to reach you on account of your change of residence, and so, even apart from the pleasure it gives me, I must send you a few lines. Besides, I have to clear myself with you, for you seem to think my absence was due to indifference. At no time, believe me, would a journey to Paris have given me more pleasure. My spiritual family was there at last, as well as a greater number than

ever of very dear friends. To spend the rest of my life there after so much wandering and so much difficulty would have been a favour from God; but our good Master did not grant it. No doubt He saw that I loved too much and was too much loved; and He wanted to tear me from the place where He has never left me many years together. Many weighty matters occupy me at this moment, and although I am free to go where I like, the truth is that I am obeying what I consider imperative duties. When I resigned my seat in the Assembly in 1848, no one understood me: who is there to-day who regrets my having done so? What good could I have done in that home of impotent passions! What thanks should I give God for having early in my career shown me that my place was not there? In 1836, when I left the pulpit of Notre Dame in order to go to Rome, I was no better understood, and yet I came back stronger, with more authority, more sure of bringing the work to a finish; besides, since then I have restored a religious order in France. Was that a waste of time? To-day other concerns keep me away, and, though it is sad to have to live away from you especially, my conscience requires so painful a sacrifice. It is not, as you state, that everything that is beautiful must pass away; but the sweet is mingled with the bitter, and we must learn to live through such alternations of enjoyment and separation. God has gradually trained me to loneliness, separation and absence, to the ebb and flow of the tide; and without having a stoical heart I am more hardened than others to so chequered a lot. So don't be vexed with me! I shall

always have a warm place for you in my heart, like a dear child. We shall see one another from time to time; we will make the most of the days God may give us together; they will be graven deep in our memory. I will come and see you, and you me, as we may be able, until at last eternity shall give us, before God's face, the presence of one another for ever. That day will soon come!

I am glad you are beginning to visit our house of the Carmes. Is your new room bigger than the last? It seemed to me that you had not enough air for your lungs. The house you speak of must be a new one, that is to say, narrow, split up into tiny holes without breadth, length or height, which our architects are so simple as to call rooms. Are you comfortable in it? I hate tyranny; but if ever I were king, my first decree would be to define the space a Frenchman needs to live in. The greed of our builders will soon bring our houses down to the size of those cages of Louis XI's time, in which folk used to shut up those they didn't like. That kind of thing is very much reprobated; but people don't seem to suspect that it was then only the exception, whereas it is now the rule. So speak to me about your cage; tell me whether you can stand upright in it, lie down at full length, and receive a friend there, three very precious things in this world.

I should never get tired of treating you to my nonsense. But I must leave you for my friends the Hindoos, of whom I am at present reading something in my capacity of a Catholic monk. Good-bye, then, my dear child, and don't scold me any more for not having enough affection for you.

XLI. On Regularity in Christian Duties

Flavigny, June 21, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You have written me a good letter, for which thanks. You must not be surprised at your liability to fall off; we are all alike there. Absolute stedfastness here below is a fond dream. We first advance and then fall behind; we go with the stream; we row against it: such is our life. Besides, your health is a natural cause of weakness and remissness, which I quite understand. Take it for your chief penance, and often make an offering of it to God. The most painful mortifications are those which we do not ourselves will, which neither begin nor end where we want them. A man may have been making inward and outward acts of humility for weeks; and yet, when the time comes, a mere want of respect in some one else may upset him.

As for work, I think there is one kind which is always easy and not fatiguing—reading; not random reading, but serious and consistent reading. We thus easily gain—especially at your age, when the memory is still young and fresh—a vast deal of knowledge with little else than pleasure. The "Imitation" tells us that we ought always to be engaged in reading, writing, meditating or praying: *aut legendo, scribendo, meditando, vel orando.* It is the alternation of these kinds of occupation that fills up and at the same time gives charm to life. Reading serves to attract the mind, to feed,

ennoble and purify it; and I can never understand how wealthy men, with a library at hand, can find time hang heavy, and can even lapse into immoral habits. Idleness is the fruitful mother of bad morals, and reading, although not hard work, is enough to banish idleness.

You must pay no attention to the trouble and darkness which comes over your mind at times. We must sometimes feel our own emptiness, and see how wonderfully weak our nature is, and also how frightfully corrupt. There is not one of us in whom there are not the makings of a saint as well as of a rogue. That is the explanation of those monsters of debauchery and cruelty of whom history tells us. At bottom, perhaps, they were not of a more wicked nature than others, but imagination and power took away from them every restraint. The devil is as bad as he is only because of the power he has without any moral curb.

I advise you always to be regular in your confessions and communions, and generally in all the exercises which you have laid down for yourself. Such subjection to rule is very useful, although it often seems to us that it would be better to follow the irregular impulse of sentiment.

Good-bye, my dear child; do not be downhearted. Take each day as it comes, and serve God. Don't make plans. God will call you at His own and your own time. That is the simplest, the safest and the sweetest course to follow.

XLII. On being Forgotten by the World

Flavigny, July 6, 1852.

My dear Friend,—I am setting out for Toulouse, and shall not be back at Flavigny before July 27. We shall be very near one another for a few days, and yet we shall not meet. What you tell me about my absence from Paris goes to my heart, except for one point on which I cannot agree with you. You are afraid lest I be forgotten. Alas! my dear friend, the sweetest thing in the world is to be forgotten by men, save by those who love us and whom we love. Others by taking notice of us bring us more trouble than joy; and when we have done our work, ploughed our furrow, great or small, in which we have sown good seed, the best thing of all is to leave it in the hands of Providence and disappear into His bosom. So the thought of being forgotten does not affect me: rather I am glad of it, and the only thing which gives me any pain in the separation, besides being deprived of my friends, is the thought that perhaps I might have been of use to a few young souls like your own. But no man can do every kind of good at the same time; what he gains on one side he loses on another, and only God in the work of His bounty embraces at a single moment all times and all places.

XLIII. Community Life

Flavigny, November 3, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was wondering what had become of you when your nice little letter came and relieved me of my uneasiness. You are quite right in believing that community life is a source of great strength, and that it is the surest road to a useful and spiritual life. When we are alone, we are limited to ourselves; and individually we are but poor stuff, whether in mind or morals. When we are many under one rule, we help, enlighten, support and edify one another; our strength is increased tenfold, and even the least of us wins a certain importance beside those greater than he.

I am daily finding in souls which God throws across my path that sacred fire which poor M. de la Mennais kindled around him; notwithstanding that he has gone, nearly all have kept something from that early intercourse; that is the case in various degrees with all those who band themselves together for a common end under the same leader and the same law. It results from a decree of Providence, or rather from that great and mysterious threefold unity which is the essence of the Divine Being, and to which we are in a manner likened by our poor little associations in this world.

As for the new Oratory, I know most of its members a little, and have the highest expectations from their banding together. They are talented men, as well as pious, and no doubt

will have God's blessing. I had long hoped for the restoration of that congregation, and it could not take place under better auspices. It is true that last century it was caught in the meshes of Jansenism, but that was one of the evils of the age, which affected most bodies of religious, and the Revolution has put a gulf between those days and our own. Everything is new, for everything has been burnished and purified.

And so, my dear friend, if God moves your heart to join that beautiful congregation of St Philip Neri, of Cardinal de Bérulle, of M. de Condren, of Massillon, Malebranche, and so many more, I shall not only not be vexed but I shall be very glad. You need restraint and affection; there you will find both in return for a little sacrifice of your liberty. And what is liberty when it is lost in God and in the hearts of them that love Him? If I had not devoted myself to a religious order, I should be wealthy to-day, quietly settled in a comfortable room, able to ask you to dine, to go out with you when I chose, to accompany you to the Pyrenees; and although the loss is not small, I only regret it sufficiently to make me realise the better how precious is the grace God has given me. So will it be with you.

I shall probably be fortunate enough to see you before Christmas, for it is part of my duty to make a journey into Belgium. Meanwhile, my dearest friend, I have the greatest affection for you.

XLIV. On Stedfastness in Conviction

Flavigny, March 22, 1853.

THE news you give me of M. Ozanam is a source of great sorrow to me. He will be a sad loss to the Catholics of France, and to me especially. He was one of the few eminent men who in France, in spite of great national changes, have stedfastly clung to old and honourable convictions. His loss will thin ranks already scanty, but he will leave with them a memory as pure as his life. You must not become faint-hearted, my dear child, because the army of disinterested and faithful souls is so small in this world, even among those who have a common faith in God and in His Christ: so it has ever been, and so it will be till the end. Most men are weak and vacillating; they yield to the particular current which at any given moment is carrying the world along with it. It is only in profound minds and in hearts finely tempered by God's hand that convictions remain unshaken. Do we belong to the latter class? God only knows. But however modest should be our judgements concerning ourselves, we should at least aim at becoming men of strong, pure and disinterested convictions, and frequently recall the beautiful words of St Paul: *Gloria nostra hæc est, quod in hoc mundo conversati sumus in simplicitate cordis, et sinceritate Dei.** You are young: you will see more falls, more overthrows than I shall see

* "Our glory is this, that we have conversed in this world in simplicity of heart and in sincerity of God."—2 Cor. i, 12.

again; nerve yourself against such shocks, and be sure, my child, that the safest way to be true to oneself is to shun ambition, and that a man is not ambitious when he knows how to limit his tastes, and to seek happiness only in God, in study, and in a few souls who love. I am such with regard to you. But not being of your age, you will lose me before you are out of danger. May the thought of me afford you a little light from afar!

XLV. Saint-Maximin and Sainte-Baume—All for God's Glory

Chalais, April 28, 1853.

SINCE I got your kind and dear letter of Easter Tuesday, my dear friend, I have made a little trip as far as a place in Provence called Bargemont, which is almost at the extremity of France in the direction of Nice. I went to see a chapel and a piece of land which has been offered us for the erection of a convent of our Order, but I did not think it would suit us. On that occasion I revisited Marseilles, Toulon, Hyères, and visited, at the foot of the Sainte-Baume, our ancient church of Saint-Maximin, the finest our Order possessed in France. It is still standing. It is a basilica without a transept, and yet gothic, which gives it quite a peculiar character of simplicity and grandeur. It contains some very exquisite wood carvings, in which one of our lay-brothers represented most of our saints with appropriate symbols. The head of St Mary Magdalen is kept here in a crypt. She lived a number of years near here in the cave of

the Sainte-Baume. I could not climb up to Sainte-Baume, and contented myself with venerating the saint's head. You know that St Mary Magdalene is, together with St Cecily, the protectress of our Order, the former representing penance, the latter Christian art—two gifts which as a matter of fact have remained in our order in a remarkable degree.

Ought I to tell you that I was everywhere received with great marks of sympathy? I am astonished at it sometimes. At Draguignan, where it was known I was to pass, I found at the Curé's house a large number of men—the mayor, the chief secretary of the prefecture, and outside a large crowd. This is the first time I have seen so many people come together to see me, and at such a distance from Paris. I enjoy this kind of thing simply as a sign that I am loved, and not through pride. Besides, how quickly does popular curiosity subside, and to what is it owing? God has connected my career with incidents which have given an unusual character to my life. What moves me is receiving from time to time proofs that my voice and my writings have touched souls. No other joy is like that, and it is wholly a pious one, for God has so great a share in it that our thoughts can only turn towards Him, the Father of Light. There was much of the kind to move me in your last letter; but everything you tell me easily finds its way to my heart, and makes me feel that I love you.

My stay at Chalais, which I reached yesterday, will not be long. I shall be leaving on Ascension-day to return to Flavigny. We still have a little snow here, and the cold is rather

bitter. Save for the snow, we were not much better off in Provence, where the dry and cutting mistral wind contrasted strangely with the orange trees and flowers in full bloom. Alas, nothing is pure and perfect here below! We shall always find the sting somewhere.

By the way, I do not know when I shall have the joy of seeing you. I want to delay returning to Paris, even to pass through it, as long as possible, notwithstanding the friends I have there, to meet whom is always a great consolation to me. There is too much to sadden me there, and I have other reasons for avoiding interviews. Being alone is a great safeguard against many kinds of peril.

My dear child, let me hear from you; tell me freely of all that goes on in your heart, and be assured of my affection for you, if it is necessary for me to tell you of it again.

XLVI. Advice to a young Preacher

Flavigny, June 3, 1853.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I heard with pleasure that you had preached in the pulpit of X——, and of your intention to appear there on the five Sundays of the Month of Mary. It is a great and difficult ministry. Much study and much effort are necessary to make an eloquent or even a tolerable preacher. Many a young ecclesiastic breaks down on the way, because, when once his career has begun, he no longer learns, or reads, or meditates; his life becomes listless and lacking in fixed aim, and so he becomes jaded within a few years. That is due to the difficulty

of sharing one's life between two things so different as the activity of the pulpit and the busy retirement of the cell. Activity nearly always runs away with one, and very quickly spends itself. Speak little; give much time to preparation. Keep reading the Holy Scriptures over and over again. With the Bible and the *Summa* of St Thomas one can attain anything.

I prayed for the success of your sermon as you asked me, and am glad to hear it did succeed. You have, so far as I can see, everything necessary in preaching God's word with fruit—strong faith, genuine piety, true disinterestedness, a wish to make God known and loved, and lastly, natural gifts quite sufficient to support those of grace. Work hard, and the talents put into your charge will increase in proportion to the pains you take. No degree of fluency will avail without work: that is the key to eloquence and to knowledge, as well as to virtue.

XLVII. The Grande-Chartreuse—Bad Books—Separation from Friends

Flavigny, June 30, 1853.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Since I got your dear kind letter I have made a trip to Oullins and Chalais. We left Oullins with fifteen of our pupils; and we crossed together between Chalais to the Grande-Chartreuse, a magnificent chain of mountains and valleys unknown and unfrequented except by cows, wood-cutters and forest-keepers: for the sake of acccuracy, let me add, by the smugglers between France and

the Savoy. Every one goes to the Grande-Chartreuse by either of the two roads from Saint-Laurent-du-Pont and le Sappey, no one by the mysterious cross-country road which cuts from Chalais between precipices, over moors, through marvellous scenery, through valleys decked out with meadows, and over rugged pine-clad heights. I hope you will one day make this expedition with me. It is very different from Flavigny and its tiny woods, which nevertheless you liked, and which I am about to leave for Mattaincourt, in Lorraine, where I am to preach the panegyric of the Blessed Peter Fourier, before I don't know how many bishops and a crowd of pilgrims. I mean to have the sermon printed, and will send you a copy, however unworthy it be of your illustrious attention.

I am not over-pleased at the idea of your reading such books as those you mention to me. You are, it is true, no longer a child, but at every time of life is poison dangerous. What is there to read in Voltaire save his dramatic masterpieces? His *Contes*, his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, his *Essai sur les Mœurs Des nations*, and all those nameless pamphlets which he poured forth at every season against the Gospel and the Church? Twenty pages enable us to judge of their literary worth and of their moral and philosophical poverty. I was between seventeen and eighteen when I read these extravagant utterances, and I have never since been tempted to open a single volume, not indeed because I was afraid of their doing me harm, but from a deep conviction of their worthlessness. Unless it be for purposes of reference with a useful end, we should confine ourselves here below to read-

ing the masterpieces of the great; we have not time enough for the rest.

Still less should we be able to spare time for those writings which are, as it were, the public sewers of the human mind, and which, notwithstanding their flowers, contain nothing but frightful corruption. Just as a good man shuns the conversation of abandoned women and of dishonourable men, so ought a Christian to avoid reading works which have never done anything but harm to mankind. Rousseau is better than Voltaire: he has appreciation for what is beautiful and noble, and he does not despise his reader. But the charm of his writings, though sometimes useful for young fellows who have no regard for anything, is hardly so to a soul who has the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We read in the life of St Jerome that he was scourged by an angel, who whilst striking him reproached him for reading Cicero with more zest than the Gospel. How much more would your reading deserve such punishment if God always showed us in this life what He thinks of our actions!

Your reproach about the shortness of my letters is due to another mistake. It is very pleasant to write to those one loves; and if life were meant simply for the enjoyment of lawful pleasures, we should never tire of conversing, near or far, with those souls whose life forms part of our own. But, alas, how much has to be done before satisfying the inclinations which most attract us! When we read the lives of the saints, we are frightened at the little time they gave to the simple affections of the heart, because they believed that thereby they would be de-

priving of their help those who had no friends here below. Forgive me my shortness, then. A word is short, but a single word may suffice to tell us all that it is sweetest to hear, and it is enough for us to know that it is frequently repeated.

A thousand messages to your two friends. I embrace them as well as you, if you will forgive such boldness, as a mark of my tender affection for yourself.

XLVIII. On Rejoicing in Success for God's sake—Purity of Religious Vocation

Flavigny, July 28, 1853.

I CANNOT possibly feel any sorrow for having kept you awake the other night, my dear friend, nor even for having forfeited your praise. I think self-love has got very weak within me, and that I no longer suffer from the fever of glory, if ever I had the misfortune to do so. But it is always a satisfaction to have spoken well of our good God, since good words help others on to good deeds. No doubt it is hard to keep human nature from having a share in this satisfaction: in what has it not got a share? But when the sentiment is good at bottom, God no doubt forgives the little weakness which is mixed up with it. What touches me is the knowledge that I have suggested to you a few good thoughts and have stirred your soul, and also the expression of affection you let fall for myself.

I am glad you have decided on the order of ——. There are several features in your

temperament which ill accord with the religious life; but you are young, and I have learnt by experience that good will, allied with sincere and fervent faith, by degrees smoothes down any little roughness in one's character as well as the imperfections of the mind. I have no doubt that you will get the better of your rather lively spirit of independence; our Lord will nail you sweetly to His cross, and you will there forget, in communion with other souls and with Himself, all the deceitful delights of this world. It is joining the priesthood with ideas other than that of sacrificing oneself to the mystery of redemption that makes bad or indifferent priests; everything may be mended or made whole but that original sin. Now, your intention is certainly pure, devoted and generous, and so the revolt of nature in you will give way before the daily embrace of your crucifix.

How I love you! The stiffness of the age does not allow me to express the love I really feel for you. I love you at once like a friend and a child, because I am at the dividing line from which one may examine at the same moment life's beginning and its end.

I wish you every good luck in your examination for the licentiate. We are getting ready here for the feast of St Dominic, which on account of the blessing of our chapel will be a big affair this year. The Bishops of Dijon and Autun are coming, as well as M. de Montalembert, to whom you take off your hat in the street.

Good-bye. I greet you with all the respect due to a man upon the eve of his licentiate.

XLIX. Frederic Ozanam—The "Ere Nouvelle"

Chalais, September 17, 1853.

My dear Friend,—Since your last letter I have done many things and have travelled much. We have taken possession of our college of Oullins, and I myself went to Toulouse to found there a house of our order. The archbishop of that city consented to it very readily, and measures are being taken to buy and get ready a house for us. Toulouse is the cradle of St Dominic and the tomb of St Thomas Aquinas. No town is to any other religious order what Toulouse is to us. Hence it seems to me as though by settling there I were putting the crown to my career, and that there my labours and my life alike will finish. It is probable that before very long the matter will practically be arranged, and I am hastening to make the provincial visit of our houses in France and Belgium, in order to be free to devote myself to that work.

I will twice take Paris on my way, the first time almost immediately, and the second time on my return from Belgium. The first time I shall only spend a day there; on the second five or six. That is to say that I promise myself the pleasure of seeing you before my exile at Toulouse.

I learned yesterday, from a Lyons paper, of the death of poor Ozanam. It really grieved me. We were associated together in 1848 in the foundation of the same work, and afterwards, no

less than before, we remained true to the same motto—"Religion, tolerance, civil and political liberty." Such community of aim and such stedfastness had become so rare, by the betrayal of so many others, that notwithstanding differences of opinion, greater in 1848 than at any other time, I felt myself bound by esteem and attachment to that generous soul. He has gone from us here below. He is a link broken off from the short chain of good, talented Christian men. Shall we get others? Shall our declining years be comforted and adorned by any more such noble souls? Alas! if any such do arise, they will only come in distant contact with us; I shall be too old to join my life with theirs; they will see me go from them in my turn like a stranger. You alone, who are younger than myself, will give me a place in your memory, and you will remember for some few days that you knew me and that I was fond of you.

Your thesis has come to hand. I do not congratulate you upon it, because I am no longer able, if ever I was, to pass an opinion upon the merits of a piece of jurisprudence; but I congratulate you on being on the eve of sacrificing to God the position you have gained in the world. C—— will have told you he saw me at Sens. He came to me like a whiff from yourself, and whilst I greeted him, I almost imagined I was clasping you in my arms. Good-bye, then, until Sunday! It will be a great day, but seems a long way off.

L. On Detachment of Heart

Toulouse, November 9, 1853.

I WAS daily expecting, my dear friend, the news of your entrance at ——, which your letter has just brought me. You must not be surprised at difficulties at the beginning. I myself, even at my age, never enter upon a new undertaking, though it be merely the foundation of a house, without feeling sad and downcast. The very change of place is painful to me. How much more so a total change of life! You are passing from absolute freedom, surrounded with every kind of affection, to a rule under which your actions, your hours and your relations are regulated and controlled. It would take much less to affect one's natural spirits, apart from the question of one's vocation by God and His dispositions in your regard. Jesus Christ Himself, on the eve of His sacrifice, was troubled, and He asked God to take the chalice from His lips. What must be the case with us? Afterwards the rule becomes sweet; the animal part of our being bends beneath it; the soul gathers great peace from it; she finds that it puts her on the road to every kind of virtue.

As to the impression made on you by certain doctrines heard during your retreat, you must bear in mind that no preacher and no book are matters of faith. There are many ways of setting forth the duties of perfection, and those of a particular man or of a particular order, without being blamable, may easily disaccord with the spiritual taste God has given us.

Detachment is undoubtedly a law of the

Gospel and a condition of perfection; but it does not therefore follow that we are to love no reasonable creature with a love more special than the general charity we are bound to show to everybody. Well-controlled affections, that is, those made subordinate to the law of God and to the love we owe Him above all things, are no bar to holiness. The lives of the saints, beginning with that of our Lord, are full of, and even distinguished by, affections of the kind. No one will venture to say, I think, that our Lord did not love St John and Magdalene with tenderness and predilection, and it would be singular if Christianity, founded upon the love of God and men, ended in nothing but dryness of soul towards all that is not God. Still, passion often finds its way into friendships, and that is what makes them dangerous and hurtful. Passion upsets both the senses and the reason, and too frequently ends in harm and in sin. That is why masters of spiritual life recommend detachment, but not want of affection. Detachment, so far from destroying love, even adds to it and fosters it. What destroys love is selfishness, and not the love of God; and there never was on earth more lasting, purer or more tender love than that which the saints cherished in their hearts, at once so empty and so full—empty of themselves and full of God.

I got to Toulouse on October 29, at eleven at night, and the next day, according to my habit of putting off nothing which may be done, I took possession of our house, which is quiet and convenient, and will be sufficiently religious in appearance. In spite of the eagerness of many persons to serve us and look after us, I was

somewhat sad. It is hard to be placed at my age in a spot with which one has had no previous connection, no associations, no ties of friendship. Toulouse is, it is true, the cradle of St Dominic, and the body of St Thomas Aquinas lies there. That ought to be enough for me; still nature chafes a little. Only the saints find in prayer a means of making heaven out of any place whatever.

Our chapel has not yet been blessed, so that our Lord does not yet dwell there. We are waiting for the Archbishop, who will not come till the tenth of this month. A little festivity will bring together our earliest friends. It will probably take place on Wednesday, the 18th, the feast of the Dedication of St Peter's.

Pray for me often. I have great disappointments as well as great consolations. It is one of my disappointments to see you no longer. I do not think I have had that happiness for eight or ten months. Since that time you must have become more holy and therefore more lovable. You do not say whether your friend is with you. I embrace you both, so that you may get used to putting aside your jealousy. Good-bye.

LI. On Friendship

Toulouse, December 28, 1853.

My dear Friend,—When I compare your two last letters, it seems to me that you have already made great progress in spiritual life; you are beginning to get a little mastery over yourself, and, above all, to acquire that wonderful readi-

ness in having recourse to God, and you are becoming tenderly united with Him.

It is true you are still very weak with regard to creatures you love, and I don't know how far that is wrong when none of the rights of God are sacrificed by such affections. There is only one of those affections which, I think, is dangerous, even when it is pure—I mean, that which relates to those persons who are most loved by the world. The serpent is entwined too closely round their necks to allow us to draw near without dread; we must always keep them at a safe distance.

But as for friendship, the memory of beautiful haunts, the love of literature, all the soul's higher enjoyments, are not they the entrance to the temple in which we worship God, and in which we love Him more than our own life? It is a great secret to be able to love God whilst loving something else as well; it is easy to put Him in the second place. That is a danger, I grant; but when it is sought to avoid that danger by completely isolating the heart from all save God, does not greater evil follow? In heaven we shall love God above all things; lost in the contemplation of His beauty and His goodness, it would seem that we should no longer look upon anything else; yet theology teaches us that in Him and even around Him we shall see all the companions of our everlasting bliss. It tells us that their happiness shall flow into our own. God will be everything, yet we shall be something. It is true that here below even the best creatures are not wholly in God. The flesh, the world and the devil have still a certain share in them, and by inclining towards them we may be afraid of falling

away from God. That is one of the drawbacks of our present state, and perhaps the greatest. But then God is in them too; He dwells in souls who love Him, and who are His temples, to use St Paul's own words. So we may live in them with Him, and when I examine myself as to the fruit of my affections, these do not seem to me to lessen that almost irresistible attraction which leads me to a love of a much stronger and deeper kind. We complain of the thanklessness and hardness we still find in those souls who love us most: it is true; for God alone is tenderness that cannot be fathomed. In all save Him we may drift on to those sad shores on which are shattered affections which we thought could never die. But that terrible catastrophe overtakes those souls chiefly who live away from God, and in whom love is a sensuous passion rather than a movement of the heart. When the senses are still, when beauty of the flesh no longer moves, the affections have strength of quite a different kind.

I have often noticed that young men who abandon themselves to their passions are hardly capable of feeling or even of understanding friendship. To win the affection of one of the same sex implies purity, since behind such love there is nothing to attract the senses. That is why real friendship is so scarce a thing. Hardly have young men come to the age when the passions are awakened, when they plunge headlong into their gratification, their heart becomes withered in the convulsions of unlawful pleasure, their regard for other men becomes bleared and impotent, so that it is blind to the beauty of the soul and can take no pleasure in it.

Even in those who enjoy friendship, it is limited; our poor weak senses separate us in many ways from those we love best, and it is only in heaven that our embrace will be everlasting. Until then, my poor little friend, we must love and forgive, just as God forgives us all our unfaithfulness. And yet He was crucified for us! Which of us, who think we love so well, would have consented to be crucified for his friend?

It is settled that on Friday, December 30, at half-past nine in the morning, the Archbishop of Toulouse will come and bless our chapel and solemnly instal our community. There will be a big dinner after the ceremony, at which the notabilities of the secular and regular clergy will be present. I must confess to you that we are going to have green peas and Perpignan artichokes, a dreadful thing, surely, for the installation of friars vowed to poverty and mortification. But as we are to be treated to the dinner my objections to green peas and artichokes in mid-winter were overruled.

Just fancy! an old man of eighty, who, before the Revolution, lived when quite a child opposite our great convent at Toulouse, and who was in the service of the Fathers, has written me a long letter full of details of what took place in this poor convent on the eve of its fall: he gives me the names of our famous preachers, our professors, and takes me step by step into the most secret affairs of the community, overjoyed at seeing the restoration of our Order in the very spot where he saw it flourish in his youth. So do all things pass away and live again. Here we are at the end of another year: I close it by greeting you tenderly and assuring you that I

love you as well as a poor creature who loves God can love another creature who does the same.

LII. Confidential Letters---The Beautiful and True---Drinkable Gold

Toulouse, February 2, 1854.

I HAVE just read your letter a second time, my very dear friend. After having done so I took a penknife to scratch out and smooth over the corrections in it. I must tell you, since you are to have all my secrets, that I have a horror of corrections and interlining: I like to leave an unsuitable word in a letter rather than scratch it out to replace it with one that is better French or more expressive. That is sacrificing inward to outward beauty if you like, but I can't help it. Therefore, whatever you let fall from your pen, be careful never to correct it. Besides, is it not a piece of vanity to wish to be faultless in a letter? What does it matter about repetitions, over-long sentences, or expressions which are not approved? If we say what we feel just as it comes, that's enough, and I think I set you the example, although I have more to lose than you by writing bad French.

You were wrong in showing my last letter. Beautiful or not, it was for you alone, and I understand by you alone those also whom you are fond of, and who are, as it were, a part of your soul; for I am obliged to take your soul with all its dependencies, or I should not love it wholly. That does not mean that I must actually love all those whom you love, but that I must have a

liking for them and allow my affection for you to overflow a little into their hearts. The knowledge that these things are shown to others, that is, to strangers, chills the style, and one becomes disinclined to write with so much *abandon*. We do not mind laying ourselves bare to those we love, but we do not like to do it to every one. Then again, showing such letters to strangers is simply to spill the sweetest fragrance of friendship. We should be alone to read a page we love. So you deserve a penance from me; but you are still too much of a novice to like penance, and I will let you off scot-free.

I am of your opinion: beauty alone moves the soul to its very depths. But you are wrong in contrasting beauty with goodness: there is no beauty without goodness. The beautiful is the harmony of the true and the good in the same thing, the mingled splendour of both; and if you were to meet a face in which perfection of feature and absolute beauty of outline existed, without any expression of goodness in the eyes or on the lips, it would be the head of a Medusa. It is true that mere goodness cannot attain to beauty: the latter supposes a certain splendour, and in that sense goodness alone cannot move to rapture.

Here I am already half way through my work. On Sunday next I shall give my fifth conference. Up to the present I have treated of Life, the Life of the Passions, Moral Life, and the Necessity of a Life higher than the Moral Life. That is as far as I have got. The audience is as large as possible, and very sympathetic, although the nave is filled by grown-up men, and the young rather keep to the aisles. Our little chapel is always full, and we are beginning to have a great

number of confessions. The clergy deserve all praise. I am presently going to dine at the Great Seminary, it being their feast-day, and in a few days one of us will preach the retreat at the Little Seminary.

By the way, my dear friend, you would never imagine what treatment I am undergoing for my throat: I am drinking simply nothing less than *drinkable gold;* do you hear?—gold, formerly discovered by the famous magician Cagliostro, and recovered by an old diplomatist, who does me the honour of visiting me, and who, having nothing more to do with the unravelling of human affairs, has for the last twenty years been searching for a modest elixir to prolong our life, just to two, or it may be three hundred years. He gave me a little bottle of *drinkable gold*, and next Sunday before my conference I am bravely going to take seven drops of it in a cup of black tea. This worthy man's joy is to see what will happen to me with his gold in my throat, and I cannot deny him the pleasure. Think whether in Paris, with all the clever men you have there, I should ever have had such luck! I will give you an account of the experiment.

Good-bye, my dear little friend. I think you are beginning to love our good God, and to feel the effects of separation from the world. I share in your joy, and love you, if possible, more than ever.

LIII. Melancholy—The Crimean War—The Death of Lamennais

Toulouse, March 6, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You were very wrong in not writing to me, as you were going to do, before you got my answer to your last letter; and this must not happen again. Write to me when your heart tells you to do so, as frequently and at as great length as you like, provided you do not feel hurt if I do not answer you as quickly as you would like. If you loved me well, you would hear my answer through space; you would know that I was glad to read your letter over and over again, and you would forgive me for being behindhand on paper.

The fine weather reminds me as well as yourself of our walks at this season in the woods at Bellevue and Meudon. Shall we ever have any more like them either there or elsewhere? God only knows; but it is certain that we shall have the joy of continuing them in yet more beautiful woodlands in a springtide that shall never end. We must arrange to meet there. The rest is, as you say, but the preparation, the prelude, the entrance hall; and it is the sad lot of men who have no faith to wish to limit their friendship to this life. We shall perhaps see one another but seldom here below, but one day we shall see one another for ever. You will then be very beautiful, and I shall have recovered my youth to contemplate yours. Between this and then I shall grow old, and so will you; but old age is only a

dream which conceals the approach of renewal and of immortality. In the meanwhile we must pass through sad times; we find them everywhere. Melancholy is the great queen of souls that feel keenly: she touches them without their knowing how or why, at a secret, unexpected hour. The ray of light which gladdens others saddens them; the rejoicing which stirs and enraptures others, pierces them with a dart. Scarcely can God and our Lord dispel in the heart that loves Them those vain and bitter clouds. Such suffering is the more difficult to overcome, because the source of it is unreal.

You ask me what I think of the Crimean War. I believe it to be just. The union of France and England against the arrogance of schism and despotism is a great matter. The law of Christian nations is to prevent the world from falling under one master as in the time of the Roman Empire. That is the reason why everything which, in regenerate Europe, has tended to such immoderate ambition has met with a decisive check. Charlemagne himself divided his empire; the popes themselves opposed successfully the too great extension of the Holy Roman Empire. France, for a century and a half, from Charles V to the treaty of Westphalia, worked for the humiliation of the house of Austria, which had succeeded to two worlds; Europe formed a league against Louis XIV, and overthrew Napoleon. It is now Russia's turn. The die is cast; and whatever may be the present issue, the path is marked out. Russia will go no further; and if she madly persists in plans condemned by God, they will be her fall. Still, I do not think the

Turks should long remain encamped in Europe. God is working for two ends—their expulsion and the limiting of Russia's power. Those two ends seem contradictory, but God reconciles what seems irreconcilable, and sunshine immediately follows the storm. So make up your mind to see Russia humbled, and the Turks driven out sooner or later—if not at once, at least within a little while.

You said a word to me about M. de la Mennais. His death followed quickly upon the prayers so many souls offered up to God for him. What a death! There is none in the history of the Church that makes so sad an impression on me, not even that of Arius. Arius was stricken ignominiously down in a place set apart for the vilest wants of the human body, but he had not himself written his last will about his funeral. That abandonment, that pauper's coffin, that common grave without a single token left to a single friend, that universal silence over a tomb which might have been so illustrious—all this raises a kind of spectre which haunts me. Thirty years ago, when I came to Paris, I found M. de la Mennais crowned with glory and looked upon as a father of the Church; and now he is dead, an infidel, without principles, without fixed belief, without friends, leaving a memory which will ever remain a load on Christendom.

Then I call to mind all the circumstances of my relations with him—the time when I saw him good and happy, surrounded by vigorous young men; the misgivings I had of his fall, our separation, the twenty years that have rolled by since, between the time that I used to

stay with him in Paris, in Rome and at La Chesnaie, and the grave which has closed over him for ever. What varied memories, which gather from one another a power under which the mind sinks in astonishment! I feel also, I own it to you, strengthened; this terrible judgement opens my eyes to the past; I thank God for having so quickly enlightened me with regard to my duty, and given me the courage to carry it out publicly. The first separation was very painful, and so is this; but it is qualified by a sentiment of God's justice, of a thing done, of a drama played out. God has spoken: blessed be His holy Name.

Be always very gentle and very humble, my dear child; everything may be made up for by these two virtues, but nothing compensates for their absence.

(We give here several fragments of letters from Father Lacordaire regarding Lamennais.)

LIV. Unswerving Attachment to Catholic Unity—Letter to Lamennais on leaving him

La Chesnaie, December 11, 1832.

I SHALL leave La Chesnaie this evening. Honour obliges me to do so, since I am convinced that, for the future, my life would be useless to you on account of the difference in our views touching the Church and society, which difference does but increase daily, notwithstanding my earnest endeavour to follow the development of your opinions. I believe that neither during my

life, nor for long afterwards, will republican institutions be possible in France, or in any other country of Europe; and I cannot adopt any system which is grounded on an opposite view. Without giving up my liberal ideas, I see and believe that the Church has had grave reasons, in the profound corruption of parties, for refusing to move as quickly as we should have liked. I respect her views and my own. Your opinions may perhaps be truer and more profound than mine; and, seeing your natural superiority over me, I ought to be satisfied that such is the case: but man is not made up of reason alone; and since I cannot rid myself of the ideas which divide us, it is but right that I should put an end to a community of life which is of great advantage to me but a burthen to you. Conscience, no less than honour, obliges me to do so, for I must employ my life somehow or other in God's service; and, not being able to follow you, what should I be doing here but wearying and discouraging you, shackling your plans, and sacrificing myself to no purpose?

You will never know save in heaven the suffering I have undergone for the last year, from the simple fear of giving you pain. In all my doubts, my perplexities, my vacillation, I have had you alone in view; and, however hard my lot may one day become, nothing will ever equal the grief which I feel on the present occasion. I am leaving you in peace with the Church, higher than ever in public opinion, so superior to your enemies that they are as nothing. I could choose no better moment for doing what, while giving you some pain, will, believe me, spare you much greater. I do not exactly know as yet what I shall do,

whether I shall go to the United States, or remain in France, or in what position. Wherever I may be, you will ever have proofs of the respect and attachment for you which I shall ever cherish; and I beg you to accept this expression of them from a wounded heart.

LV. Union with the Church in all things—Respect and Love for her Authority

M. DE LA MENNAIS declares that "for many reasons, and chiefly because it is the province of the Holy See to decide what is good and useful for the Church, he is resolved to stand aloof from all matters touching her." I have to remark that nothing can be more anti-Catholic than such words. Were that the case, the Church would be unfortunate indeed. Her children have never any right, under whatever pretext, to stand aloof from what concerns her: they must bear their part according to their position and capacity, as M. de la Mennais has done up to the present; but their action must be accompanied by submission to the direction of the Holy See; they must not wish to drive her their own way. No degree of talent, no services, however great, compensate for the harm done to the Church by separation, of whatever nature, or by an action done without her bosom. I would rather throw myself into the sea with a millstone round my neck than entertain hopes or ideas, or even support good works apart from the Church.*

M. de la Mennais' misfortune does not so much lie in his haughty character, in his faulty instinct

* October 6, 1833.

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in matters human and divine, as in his contempt for pontifical authority and for the grievous situation of the Holy See. He has blasphemed Rome in her misfortunes; it is the crime of Cham, the crime which, next to deicide, has been visited on earth with the most palpable and lasting punishment. Wo to him who troubles the Church! Wo to him who blasphemes the Apostles! The Church is destined to be victorious still; the time of Antichrist has not yet come. M. de la Mennais' fall will not check the formidable march of truth: that very fall will but help it forward.*

I am accused of being merciless towards him! Ah! if ever I had found in the Abbé de la Mennais' heart a single real regret, a single sentiment of humility, that trait of tenderness which inspires pity in misfortune, I could not have seen it or thought of it without being stirred to the inmost depths of my soul.

When we were together, and I thought I found in him resignation, sentiments free from pride and passion, I cannot express what I felt. But such moments were few indeed, and all that I can call to mind is stamped with a character of wilfulness and blindness such as dries up pity.

You I pity, because you are suffering through another's fault, because you are a victim, a victim of the goodness of your heart. But he! Well, I must expect justice from God alone. He will bear witness to the purity of my intentions; He will say why I sided with the Church against a man; He will show on which side was single-minded faith, candour and consistency; He will show who of all men was the real friend of the

* December 2, 1833.

Abbé de la Mennais, and whose was the advice which, if followed, would have raised his glory and virtue higher than ever.

The hour of justice will, I feel convinced, come round sooner than is imagined; but if it does not come in this world, I shall not find fault with Providence. I am content to have done my duty.*

LVI. God blesses Obedience—Lamennais once more

I AM quite alone, busy, at peace, trusting in God and in the future. We can do nothing without the Church and without time. Ah! if M. de la Mennais had been willing, what a noble part might he have filled! He was at the height of glory, and I have never been able to understand that a man of such noble parts should not have recognized the price of that with which God endowed him. The part he might have played in religion, but which he is giving up, is so beautiful, so easy to fill, so far higher than any other, that in three months at Paris I have lately stirred more hearts and more minds than I could have done during the fifteen years of the Restoration.†

Obedience costs something; but I know from experience that sooner or later it has its reward, and that God alone knows what is good for us. . . . Light comes to him who submits just as to one who opens his eyes.‡

To do one's duty unflinchingly and simply is still the surest way of winning from men true

* February 3, 1834. †April 17, 1834.
‡ November, December, 1834.

and well-merited regard. Time is necessary for all things. It is enough that we should always be ready without ever anticipating the hour appointed by Providence. What a difference between 1834 and 1844! Ten years have been enough to change the entire scene. One can hardly believe what we have gained in the late campaign in union, in strength, in the promise of future success. Even though the cause of freedom of education were lost for the next fifty years, we should still have gained something even greater than that, since we should have won the means of getting it and with it many of the liberties which are needed for the salvation of France and of the world. . . . If only poor Abbé de la Mennais had waited, what a moment it would have been for him! Alas! we told him as much: he would have been greater than ever. It was only necessary to be humble and to trust in the Church. Up to the very last moment the game was going splendidly—so well indeed that now it is won. We who were younger and more simple-minded received the Church's guidance; we frankly acknowledged how exaggerated had been our talk and even our notions; and God, who searches the reins and heart, was merciful towards us. He vouchsafed not to crush us utterly and even to make further use of our service. Never before in the Church's history was so great a reward given to submission; never before was revolt so terribly punished.*

* March, June, 1844.

LVII. Obedience to the Church and to the Holy See

Now I have wholly done my duty towards M. de la Mennais. I have said what ten years' personal experience has taught me about the school he wished to found, and had I done nothing else in my life, I should die happy. My conscience is at ease; it breathes at last; after ten years' suffering I am now beginning to live* . . . .

Some few at least understand me; they know that I have become neither a republican, a *juste-milieu*, nor a legitimist, but that I have advanced one step towards that noble character of a priest who is above all parties, though sympathizing with every need. They know that the fruit of my journey to Rome has been to tone down my ideas, to withdraw me from the fatal whirlpool of politics, to attach me exclusively to the things of God, and through the things of God to the slowly increasing happiness of nations. They know that the only reason of my separation from a famous man was my unwillingness to plunge deeper with him into the unhappy politics of the day, and the impossibility of getting him to take up a position in which the applause of the Church awaited him, and from which he would have done more for the emancipation of man than he will ever do from the way he has taken.†

I am no saint: I know that only too well. But I have a disinterested love for truth; and

* June 3, 1834. † April 27, 1834.

although I sought to withdraw honourably from the difficult position in which I stood, no thought of ambition or pride was for a moment the motive of my conduct on that occasion. Pride always suggested to me—Remain as you are; do not change; do not lay yourself open to reproaches from your former friends. God's grace spoke louder: Trample human respect under foot; give honour to the Holy See and to God! My cleverness was merely frank submission. If everything has turned out as I foresaw, it was only by putting aside my own views that I was able to foresee it. It is with no kind of pleasure that I see what a chasm obstinacy has dug at the feet of one who has rendered such great services to the Church; I hope that God will check him in time. But I rejoice that the Sovereign Pontiff, who is the father, not of one Christian only but of all, should at length by his divine authority have settled questions which wrought havoc in my native Church in her bloom, which led astray from the path of truth many souls who were beguiled in all sincerity, and of which during long and bitter years I felt the unhappy charm. If there has been any kind of personal triumph for myself, may it perish; and may the Church of France, after so deep and so memorable a lesson, be able to flourish in that peace and energy which union brings. May we all be forgiven the errors of our youth; and let us all pray together for him who led us into them by the extravagance of an imagination so beautiful that we cannot but weep over it.*

I yield to no one in that deep respect which we owe to past memories; and should M. de la

* August 2, 1834.

Mennais ever sever himself from the Church, should he even become the most dangerous heresiarch there has ever been, there would yet intervene an infinite distance between his enemies and myself; and no one would read what I should be compelled to write without recognizing the grief of my position, the constancy of my regard, the disinterestedness and faithfulness of my conscience. There are grave moments in a man's life when he is beset by conflicting circumstances, by grave duties which seem mutually antagonistic. . . . It will be known in heaven whether I acted with the fickleness of one who breaks without reason and without a pang the ties which bound him.*

LVIII. Poverty and Greatness

March 15, 1833.

As a rule the great men of old were poor. That is where every one fails to-day; people no longer know how to live on little. It is true that, used as I have been to live poor from my birth, I may be unable to see the difficulties in the way of those whose habits are not like my own. But retrenchment of the useless, the absence of what is even relatively necessary, is the high road to Christian detachment, as well as to the strength of character of the ancients. . . . Whoever has attained to moral beauty of life, not only in God's sight, but in men's, cannot be knocked over by any outward rebuff without showing that his greatness of soul was illusory, his eminence mere good fortune. The greatest need of

* August 19, 1833.

our age is a man who, with everything within his grasp, is yet content with little. For my part, humanly speaking, I long for nothing greater. A great heart within a little house is what has ever touched me most here below. The Abbé de la Mennais dying poor and faithful at La Chesnaie would have been the hero of this age, in which the fortune of every man is greater than his deserts.

(The following letters are once more arranged in chronological order, broken by the series of letters relating to Lamennais.)

LIX. Equality in Friendship

Toulouse, April 3, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I must scold you soundly for the very obsequious way in which you still continue to address me. Now, for the future, don't call me "Father," still less "Reverend Father," but "My Friend." For I am so very sincerely, and, although spiritually I may have been of help to your soul, still it is not that which has brought our hearts so closely in touch; it is not on that ground that God has given me such affection for you. You were a Christian already; I did not snatch you from the darkness of ignorance and error and bring you, transformed, into the abode of clear light in which you now dwell. Even had I done so, the character of a friend reaches wider than that of a father; it implies regard of a freer and more open-hearted character than the other; and that is what I have for you, and you for me, unless the wish is master to the thought. If you too have this feeling on your side, if your

heart be really inclined towards mine, let it follow its bent simply and naturally; speak and write to me as to an equal, mindful of Seneca's words: "Amicitia pares aut accipit aut facit." I am older than you, and if the soul were wholly subject to time, we could not overcome the difference in age. Besides, if God has given me some little talent and renown, you yourself know how trifling a thing that is, and nothing would be more dreadful than fame if it were a hindrance to affection. So you must forget what I ought to forget myself, and what is of no value as compared with virtue. We both of us know and love God. That puts us on the same level for always. Those who do not live in God may be kept poles apart by all those differences which naturally arise in this world—differences of birth, fortune, talent and reputation; but in God, in whom we both live, the world disappears and the infinite leaves, between those who love one another and meet in Him, no distance save that of love, which draws all things together.

I hope, then, that for the future you will treat me with sweet and loving familiarity. I beg you to do so, and I think myself worthy of it for the deep affection for you which God has given me.

I am glad that I am to see you again, and that thought may perhaps keep me from being so piously sad as I ought to be during the great week upon which we are entering.

LX. The Memory of Frederic Ozanam

Toulouse, April 10, 1854.

YOUR letter, my dear friend, crossed one of mine. In it you remind me of your wish that I should devote a few pages to the memory of M. Ozanam, and of my promise to do so. As for that promise, I only remember having said that I would gladly speak at a service for him which it was then proposed to hold at the Church of the Carmes. I think, also, I said that I would find an opportunity for speaking of him in one of my works, if God should grant me grace to publish anything more. As the proposed service did not take place, I think that I am so far freed from my promise; as to writing about him, that is still my intention and my hearty wish.

But I see you want some more direct testimony of my regard, for you speak of an introduction either to his life or to an edition of his works. I confess I like that less. It is too much like what is commonly done. On the other hand, mention made, however late, in virtue of a lasting impression, in a work in which it is not looked for, seems to me a more serious, more earnest, more spontaneous tribute, and more likely to reach posterity, if it should ever trouble about us. Even so did Cicero in his dialogues on eloquence pay some of the orators of his day a noble tribute, which has made their names live as long as our admiration for him who surpassed them. I am not a Cicero, as you know very well; but after making all due allowances it is

not unbecoming to follow examples set by those greater than ourselves.

Scarce had the grave closed over our dear Ozanam, when he received many striking testimonies of regard and of sympathetic admiration. I have known few if any men of our day whose death has called forth so lively an expression of public sorrow. Would you have me, after that, write a preface to his works or an introduction to his life? Would such a commonplace proceeding be worthy of him? Time matters not in the case of great men. Their memory is continually kept green, and the expression of our recollections of them, so far from losing by delay, becomes one of the proofs of their title to fame. Praise which escapes spontaneously from a moved heart after a long lapse of time, is of greater value in the future than panegyrics which make a sensation for the moment. That, my dear friend, is what I feel on this matter. It seems to me to be either too late or too soon, and that the way you propose is not quite suitable. We must not husband our grief for the dear and illustrious friend now dead. Events will one day lead us to look back to him as a pattern, to speak out what our heart feels in his regard, and that will be more worthy of him and of us than a few pages about nothing in particular which I might write as an introduction to his works. There is nothing, however, to prevent you from refuting my reasons, and if you will positively have it so, I am ready to obey.

You know from my last letter that I shall be at the college of Oullins, near Lyons, on the twenty-third. I shall there await your answer, or rather your decision.

LXI. The Ecclesiastical Cut of the Hair—The Priest in the World

Toulouse, June 19, 1854.

I WILL not conceal from you, my very dear friend, that I was rather uneasy about you. As I did not think about the Trinity retreat and the ordination, I was almost blaming your forgetfulness, while you were wholly intent upon Him who was going to do you the great favour of cutting off your hair for His love. I suspect, however, that you are anything but closely cropped, and that you are somewhat tenacious of your beautiful head of hair, just as when you were in the world and used gracefully to put back the curls that fell over your forehead.

In the matter of ecclesiastical fashions for the hair I only like the Roman one, as seen in the Holy Father himself—I mean short in front and behind, without anything to hang loose or cover the ears or neck. That seems to me to be noble, dignified, severe and refined. That kind of tail or fan worn by our French priests has always seemed to me meaningless and ungraceful; and I am surprised how they cling to it, especially when the canons tell them to keep their hair short. Your hair, my dear child, is, it is true, better proportioned; it falls gracefully and naturally without forming a kind of crest, and in this you show your taste; but it does not seem to me to gain in gravity and austerity. Look at the heads of the old Roman Consuls; the ears, forehead and neck are bare. The head is shown in

its natural shape, and there is nothing effeminate about it. Religious orders have pushed such rigour still further by shaving nearly the whole head, except a crown of hair, and I confess beauty is not a gainer by it. But ought not the priest to be at least up to the level of a consul? Compare the ecclesiastical portraits of the eighteenth, seventeenth and sixteenth centuries: the last are severe, thin and slightly stiff, with short hair, and everything about them looking manly. In the seventeenth century they wore a long floating wig; the features are still noble, but they show less energy. We feel that there is more dignity in the dress than in the heart. As for the eighteenth, we find powdered hair and rosy cheeks, and one would take priests and bishops of fifty for boys of fourteen.

The Revolution revived true taste in the matter of men's hair; but our young fellows have once more fallen into an effeminate fashion of having a thick crop of long hair; and as for the clergy, they have adopted a fashion which is wholly unreasonable from any point of view; it can only be defined a feeble remnant of a wig.

Well, I have said a good deal about your tonsure; but it is the first step you are taking in priestly gravity, and I must write to you as to a man who belongs to the Church.

I was very much touched at the impression made on you by the nave of Notre-Dame. It is my great country! I always greet it as soon as I see its towers when coming into Paris. The joy it gives you makes it still more dear to me.

Madame de —— has written to me about your visit. She was very much pleased with you, and I advise you to go and see her now and then.

Notwithstanding her name, she is not a worldly woman; Jesus Christ has stripped her of the pride of her birth (a very rare thing), and she is like those Roman ladies whom St Jerome gathered round him from amid the ruins of the people and the senate. You must no longer feel that kind of uneasiness you used to experience in the homes of the rich and great: that kind of shyness and embarrassment is not becoming in a man who has renounced the world for Jesus Christ and looks upon everything with the eyes of eternity. What is a room, however sumptuous it may be, save a few feet of ground in which a mortal body lies? You must for the future look at nothing but the soul—the soul sinful or regenerate, which needs penance, or else has been cleansed in the waters of voluntary humility. A Christian presents himself before the rich and great with neither the arrogance of the demagogue nor the cringing of the courtier; he is simple and natural, without fears, without desires, without emotion.

By the way, I forgot to tell you that I have written a lecture on the "Law of History," which is to be read at the public meeting of the Academy of Legislation at Toulouse. You would never guess what is contained under the heading, *The Law of History!* I will send you a copy on its appearance.

God bless you, my dear friend; I embrace you, your beautiful hair notwithstanding, as a soul whom God loves, and whom He allows me to cherish.

LXII. The Beginnings of Religious Life

Toulouse, July 27, 1854.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was alarmed at seeing the date of your last letter—July 4. It is true I made a journey to Oullins, which took me ten days, and that on my return I found a large bundle of letters awaiting answers. Such is my excuse, if one it be. I am sure you were once more thinking that you were not meeting with the affection which was your due, and I am really sorry for it. Do not be surprised at those little clouds of melancholy which cross your soul. One of the trials of the religious life is to live with men who are not of our own choosing, and who for the most part awake in us no natural sympathy, so that we are bound to *intimacy* without that condiment of affection which makes it sweet and pleasant.

Intimacy with men of our own choosing is the sweetest and most perfect thing upon earth; it is what makes life here most like to life in heaven. Now this you no longer enjoy. You used to shut yourself up when you liked; you used to withdraw into the little shrine of your heart or of your room; then you would leave it at will to see or receive your friends. Now, however, neither privacy nor intimacy is your own. You have to be glad when you would like to feel sad, to be at the beck and call of the first comer among your brethren, even of him for whom you have the least liking; it is a perpetual thwarting of one's natural inclinations. So that life spent

in common for Jesus Christ's sake, under the influence of supernatural charity, is the greatest miracle of Christianity. In such a life a man must either be unhappy or a saint. Now, you are not yet a saint, but still you are quite enough of one to accept the sacrifice whilst you feel it. Your youthful liberty still comes back to you; you think that you are no longer loved as you used to be, and that is true in the sense that you are no longer living exclusively with people whom you like, and who are of your own choosing. You will take time to get used to it, and to love with a supernatural affection; but I trust God will grant you the grace to do so, if you are faithful to His will.

I am very glad to hear you are *maître-d'étude*, and you deserve it richly! Even so, you are not so badly off as those to whom you used to give such a bad time! They were the butt of their pupils, whilst yours respect you, and see in you our Lord's image. To be really a *maître-d'étude*, you should have been compelled by necessity to take that office in one of the University colleges. That would have been a really good revenge from the hand of God for your impertinence and naughtiness from fourteen to fifteen. But Providence treats you like a spoilt child.

As for myself, in a fortnight's time I too am going to take up the charge of young boys. On August 8, at the distribution of prizes, I take possession of Sorèze. By the boys and by every one else, however, I have been received in a spirit which promises an easy and happy administration. I am glad to leave the world to go and live with boys and young men. We can at least promise ourselves that we shall find

some among them who are steady, good and generous; and even if that be an illusion, it is yet better than the sad reality.

No doubt you have had my address to the Academy of Legislation. You see that I did not talk about the Romans so much as you expected, and that I spoke a little of things you did not expect at all. It was, indeed, a statement of my views on our own age and its future. I hope you liked it, and that my dear little friend recognized his own heart in mine.

LXIII. The School of Soreze—The Thought of Death

Sorèze, August 21, 1854.

HAVE just read your two letters for the second time, my dear friend, and am really delighted at them. I think you are beginning to like me a little, and to tell me so frankly and simply. If you but knew the joy that gives me! I cannot describe it to you. To do so I should have to go back to twenty or twenty-five, the age at which nothing keeps one from saying everything straight out. Now I am tied, and can only tell or send you a mere shadow of what I feel.

You would never guess my present life. In the first place we have had two days of public exhibition. I presided at gymnastic contests, fencing matches, horse-racing, dramatic performances, and no end of things which I had never yet seen, and which seemed to me very pleasant, and above all very touching. I compared the first years of my own youth with those

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splendid grounds, that music, those fountains, the brightness and freedom which surrounded me on all sides; and I envied the lot of those young folk whom I saw developing amid so many beauties. The next day everything was deserted. There only remained at Sorèze a few boys who were lost in the vastness of the place.

The first thing I did was to fell two hundred trees in the park. I always begin with that, no matter where I be, if only I am master. If ever France chose me for her king, which might very well be a hundred years hence, I think my first decree would be to cut down two or three million trees from the soil of our dear country. That is owing to a certain love of order, of simplicity and symmetry, which makes me uncomfortable in a place badly laid out; and I find in most of the gardens which come under my notice that their great fault is being over-planted. It is the same with writing.

But let us return to my life at Sorèze. The trees felled, I made a general visitation of the house, and ordered a host of repairs, which are now being carried out, from the putting up of pillars in the chapel to the clearing away of cob-webs from the windows and ceilings. In a house where I live I cannot bear a disorderly spot, even though it be a hundred feet under ground. So everyone is as busy as he can be, and I am getting a prodigious name for seeing everything and for prying into holes and corners unknown to the generations which came before me. Add to this consultations every day, to draw up the plan of our studies and our rules, and you will understand pretty well what I am doing and what I am, far though I am from you.

Far from you, you must understand, in the poor material sense; for in another sense I never leave you.

To turn to serious matters, I don't approve of your giving way to melancholy thoughts about death. It is true that nothing is so beautiful as to die, after having known all one can know here below—God, His Christ, and His Church; but that thought must not come from the dark side of the soul; it must come from the brighter and more serene side, just as the sun rises out of the east. To die! To bare one's neck, to kneel and lay one's head on the block in presence of God, then feel it fall for truth and justice' sake is man's highest destiny here below. Even the ancients knew that: how much more we who have seen Jesus Christ die! You will observe, too, that He found death too beautiful and sweet in itself; He clothed it with the garb of suffering and shame. Simply to desire the noble death of the scaffold, therefore, is to love it as the great men of old loved it, but not like Christians. So you must not think in that way any more; our death is the death of the cross; we must carry it daily, like a freed slave who follows his master out of love. Doubtless not one of us, however tender and heroic his aspirations, is sure of being strong enough to suffer; but that is God's business, we have nothing to do with it. Weak as we are, then, we must throw ourselves into the dread punishment of death, and, should the day come, let God make of us what we should wish to be. So with St Paul I say to you "Gaudete."

Shall we never see you at Sorèze? Will you never come and see its ash-trees and its elms two hundred years old, drink from its run-

ning brooks, climb its mountains, dive into its valleys? I don't press you; Sorèze would be too beautiful if you had seen it! I confine myself to embracing you as well as I can, and that is with warm affection.

LXIV. A Religious on Horseback—Finding Pleasure in Others' Souls

Sorèze, October 4, 1854.

I FEARED, my dear friend, that you might have been somewhat pained during our interview at Oullins, for I was myself sorry to have seen so little of you. I was only there two days; I had to hold meetings, examine the vocations of five postulants, and receive those with whom I had made appointments. That quite explains my seeing so little of you, but it was not therefore the less painful either in your case or my own. Nothing is harder than duty in conflict with affection, for duty must carry the day. But perhaps I did not tell you sufficiently how much it cost me. I sometimes hurt others unintentionally, because I do not happen to see that a thought or a circumstance is unremarked by them. But now I am much more free than then. The provincial chapter went off well; a good choice has been made for my successor, and I am at last relieved of the enormous burden which has been weighing upon me for the last fifteen years.

That restoration of the Friars Preachers in France was at bottom a desperate undertaking; it is a marvel that I did not collapse under it. Instead of that, God showed us the way, over-

threw obstacles, fed, lodged, and provided for us, found us recruits, gave us a few really saintly religious, and many more of solid worth, and a few preachers who have done good; He kept peace amongst us, and in giving up my post I have the consolation of leaving everything in good order.

As for you, my dear friend, who ride in the forest of Compiègne, and take it as a matter of course, I have nothing to say to you. A priest may certainly go on horseback in the exercise of his ministry. There are mountainous countries in which it is the only means of travelling, and even bishops make no difficulty about traversing the hilly parts of their dioceses in that way. But to ride for mere amusement, like the children of the rich, who spend the afternoon in the Bois de Boulogne, certainly seems to me somewhat bold in a religious. The horse inspires pride; riding is a luxury; do you think that Jesus Christ, who entered Jerusalem upon an ass, is pleased to see you on horseback? Not that an ecclesiastic may not be able to ride with propriety; but do you think you would wear a scarlet coat with gold braid, supposing that were still the fashion in France? Would your heart be unmoved at the thought of your being dressed like the wealthy and the great of this world? When M. de Rancé was converted to God, he sold his horses and carriages, laid aside the magnificent clothes he used to wear, and clad in mourning a body which he had long given over to sin. Is not that the act of a recollected and penitent soul? Do you think that a young unbeliever, who saw you on horseback, would be tempted in the evening to throw himself at your feet, and lay open to you the

wounds of his heart? I do not think so. A man on horseback is too high and mighty for another to kneel down to. We must humble ourselves if we would have others humble. It is related in the life of one of our saints that one day he was going through a town on horseback with his friends; God, who wanted to make him His own, threw him down into the mud, and that was the occasion of his salvation and his sanctity.

I think as you do about mountains, the sea and forests; they are the three great things in nature, and have many analogies, especially the sea and forests. I am as fond of them as you are; but as old age creeps on, nature takes less hold upon us than souls; and we feel the beauty of that saying of Vauvenargues, "Sooner or later we only find enjoyment in souls." That is why we can always love and be loved. Old age, which withers the body, gives the soul a second youth if it be not corrupted and forgetful of itself, and the moment of death is that of the blossoming of our mind.

Had I found you on horseback in the forest of Compiègne, I would certainly have given you a sound horsewhipping in my capacity of father and friend; but that does not keep me from embracing you very tenderly.

LXV. On Hope in Sickness

Sorèze, October 25, 1854.

YOUR letter, my dear friend, brought me sad news. I felt in my own heart the blow which has fallen upon yours. The worst thing possible, however, in your position would be to give way

to despondency. Despondency is a fatal feeling, even for those in good health; how much more so for those whose health is impaired! The best thing we can do when we are hard hit, is to take fresh courage in proportion to the weight of the blow. I have got through many a mess in my lifetime; many a time have I been on the point of sinking. Now, nothing was of greater use to me on such occasions than a sort of sudden energy which was given me, whence I knew not, and which, in spite of the weak and melancholy side of my nature, lifted me above myself at the very time I seemed most likely to succumb.

It is evident that God is marking out a limit for you. Neither you nor I know why; we only know surely that God is good, that He loves you, and that He has His own counsels. We must take them as they are, without being able to unravel them, and we must receive them with submission. When you have done that, and have cast off all impatience as a weakness, you must look out for the means of getting well.

I know a lady, about as big as a lark, who, one fine day, about fifteen years ago, met with what has just befallen yourself. Blood poured from her throat; she lost half her lungs and thought she had only a couple of days to live. Yet she is still alive, is active, strong, brave and almost a saint, instead of being the empty, frivolous little creature she formerly was. By her own change she has changed things about her. Her father was an infidel: he is now a believer. Her daughter is walking in the mother's footsteps. Her uncle, an old soldier who had forgotten God, has returned to Him, and serves Mass at seventy like a choir-boy. A virtue from

on high has spread around this woman, and, as she is obliged every winter to pass five or six months in the south, she has become for a great number of souls who come across her, a centre of supernatural fervour. Have you never read such things in the lives of the saints? Have you not heard of some who lay dying for a quarter of a century, and drew from that living death a prodigious activity for good? God makes use of death as well as of life. The weaker the instruments the more does He share with them His own strength and His own glory.

I have often talked to you about death and the necessity of despising it. We must now think about life. You will survive me. If I am worthy of having a few pages written about me, by reason of works of which I have been the instrument, you will write them. Meditation and writing do not need great physical strength. Even supposing God should not give you the strength necessary for the ministry of preaching, you would still have strength of another kind, which would enable you to turn your life to some purpose.

Such, my dear friend, in a few words, are the thoughts suggested to me by your misfortune and the state it has thrown you into. I pray our Lord to strengthen you; He alone can. Even friendship cannot heal great sorrow. Good-bye; promise me to take heart, and know that I should be very unhappy at the thought of your unhappiness.

LXVI. Ozanam's Works

Sorèze, January 13, 1855.

SIR,—I am very glad to have given you a few moments' consolation by the very imperfect tribute paid to the memory of our common friend, and I would willingly undertake a notice of his works in the "Correspondant." But I understand from your letter that they will appear in separate volumes. That would make it hard to speak of them all together, and might take away from their success. People do not like reading odd volumes which come out at intervals. They would come out to better advantage, and even with increased importance, if they were all published together. The volumes might be sent me as they were printed: I would study them; then at the moment of final publication my review would itself be printed.

Such is the plan I would propose. Otherwise I should be obliged to wait until the last volume had appeared, which would make great delay, and my own work would seem obviously to have been written too late. Please consider this, consult the family and friends of our dead friend, and let me know at your earliest convenience the decision come to. As regards the matter itself I am indifferent, and I should not make my personal views a condition.

Whatever is done, I shall be glad to contribute, if I can, to the fame of one of the greatest minds and noblest characters which the Church of France has brought forth in our age.

LXVII. Pseudonyms—Literary Criticism—Moderation in Study

Sorèze, May 11, 1855.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have a heap of reproaches for you. First of all the signature at the end of your letter is simply hieroglyphic: that is excusable only in business men who are afraid of being robbed if they write their names plainly. Then your article was signed with a borrowed name, which is simply monstrous. A man ought never to write anything without signing it, and above all should avoid a pseudonym. When he cannot put his name to a publication, it is an infallible sign that he ought not to have written it, and that it should not be published. You have already published a great deal without your signature; I am determined not to overlook such a crime again, especially as you have no reason for concealment. If your youth does not allow you to tell your readers who you are, why do you want readers?

Your article pleased me very much: it was graceful and touching—qualities which I also found during Holy Week in the book by M. de Melun, who had the kindness to send it to me. From time to time I get these marks of remembrance, but none charm me so much as yours.

I was hoping to see you at Sorèze very soon, but now you put me off till the month of September, when our walls will be empty. Luckily nature and autumn will not have gone. So

I shall expect you at that time, but at least do not fail us then. Alas! it is so seldom we have to offer hospitality to those who are dear to us. I ought to have nothing but a poor little cell to offer you, and in that case your health would not have allowed you to stay with me; but God has granted that I should be able to give you a room in a palace, where you will have splendid air, lovely streams, cool shade, food suited to your state of health, in fact, all that one of the great ones of the earth could offer you in his castle. Happily God's will has driven me here in spite of myself, otherwise I really don't know what would happen to me in the next world.

I have received the first five volumes of Ozanam's works; I have only to get "Dante" and the two volumes of the "Mélanges." But as I read "Dante" some time ago, I am, in fact, only waiting for the "Mélanges."

I shall be unable to finish my work without having read them, for I want to show my thorough acquaintance with that beautiful mind. I have already finished reading and noting the first volume of "La Civilisation au cinquième Siècle," and am delighted with it. It is true one sees a great difference in style between the first lessons which he revised and those of which we only have the shorthand copy; but still the whole of it is fine, full of ideas, of vigour, and of sound teaching, and is expressed with real eloquence. I consider these lessons superior to those of MM. ——, even apart from the question of their truth; at least they compare with them very favourably. There is more soul in them, and therefore more eloquence.

Let me hear about your health. Does the

improvement still continue? Are you still getting stronger? Have you courage to do nothing, to go out walking, to sleep well? If you but knew how useful it is in one's lifetime to waste one's time at the proper season! Look at Ozanam. What a difference if, instead of rushing through life as he did, he had slept eight hours a day and only worked six! He would have been living still; he would have had another thirty years before him, that is to say, six hours work multiplied by 365 days, and that multiplied by thirty! I don't know whether in my case it is laziness or mere human prudence, but with the exception of those very rare cases in which a thing must be pushed at any cost, I have a horror of hurrying and of upsetting the due course of things. Every day brings its work and its rest in happy succession; each helps on the other, and the soul, in constant activity, ripens in perpetual youth. I sometimes fancy this is mere self-indulgence on my part; yet see what the opposite system leads to!

Are you quite sure that when you give way to your intense ardour you do so for God, and not through an unavowed desire to win eminence and to achieve something?

Pride is very ingenious, as is also, I must allow, the pleasure of taking things quietly. God, knowing this, has planted thorns everywhere, and in trying to avoid them at one spot we find them at another.

Good-bye, my dear friend. I will not tell you how much I am attached to you. I am becoming more and more afraid of expressing what I feel; but do not let the coldness of my style deceive you. My style is like my manner;

it sometimes seems rather frigid because sadness or hesitation come upon me at a moment when I feel far otherwise in my heart. Good-bye!

LXVIII. Communion between Holy Souls

Sorèze, June 2, 1855.

SIR,—Your letter of May 17 reached Sorèze while I was away for a little while. That is what has delayed my answer.

I am not surprised at the dryness which you feel within you. You are troubled by faith on one side and by unbelief on the other—by your old faith which has now grown weak, and by your new unbelief, which has been fostered by the waywardness of your life. Sooner or later, I trust, truth will triumph, but that will only be by a struggle on your own part. For a long time you will continue to resist the voice of God; it will follow you through all your pleasures and through all your disappointments, until, at a day which is known only in heaven, the light of your early youth will shine upon you and restore you.

Although the question you put me is but part of the general question of truth, I will nevertheless tell you what theology teaches us about it.

All holy souls—all souls, that is to say, which are enlightened by truth and guided by charity, are in *communion*. Even here below, without knowing it, they are linked to one another, they are members of a society of which God is the centre, the life, the light, the beauty and the bliss. They help one another by their prayers and good works; they suffer for one another's sake; they are like the stones of which a church

is built, which are hidden from one another, yet support one another from the foundation to the roof. Once they reach their goal, which is God, they see themselves and all things else in God, just as here below, although but imperfectly, we see the world in the sunlight. There, in that expanse which has neither limit nor shade, they meet and enjoy one another in a far closer embrace than even during their earthly pilgrimage. Our meetings on earth are by comparison mere vain and fruitless advances. Those who were loved on earth will wonder at finding how slight a thing that love was, and true love will come to them as a revelation equalled only by their former ignorance.

In purgatory, however, in which souls are kept away from God, they only have the hope of that boundless and everlasting communion. Perhaps they may be able to see souls nearest them, if any are nearer than others; or perhaps they will mourn awhile in lonely seclusion, till their expiation shall be accomplished and they shall be admitted to the light.

As for hell, it is nothing but hate, and to be seen there can but serve to increase the hatred one receives. So it is written that the damned call to the mountains to fall upon them and *hide* them. If God allows them to be seen, it can but add to their pains, and it is useless to concern oneself about it as a blessing of which they are deprived.

That, Sir, is what faith and reason alike teach us. It is my hearty prayer that your soul may once more find peace, which is only to be had in truth.

LXIX. Conduct of a young Ecclesiastic in Time of Revolution—The Virtue of Silence

Sorèze, October 26, 1855.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not think you ought to have any scruples about laying aside clerical dress if grave events should overtake you in Italy. You have no official post there, no duty of representing the Church, and, besides, in that country questions are so much involved with matters foreign to religion, that it would be difficult to say for what cause one would be a martyr. During our first revolution the most virtuous and heroic priests had no scruple in laying aside the marks of their priesthood, and no one ever thought of blaming them for it. I was told that in 184[illegible] a respectable-looking old man, on meeting an ecclesiastic in his clerical dress, said to him: "Sir, when a man has the honour of wearing a dress like yours, he ought not to expose it lightly to the outrages of the crowd." His words impressed me. I think he was right, and that by taking them for your own guidance, should it be necessary, you will be doing well in God's sight and men's.

As for expressing your opinions on political and religious matters, you ought to be extremely reserved, and not unburden yourself even to honourable men who might seem to lay bare their own hearts to you.

Italy is upset by unprecedented troubles, and a word which in France would be harmless might

cause something worse than inconvenience. You must learn in these days to be reserved. Candour does not require you to betray yourself. It is one thing to lie, quite another to keep silence. Silence is a great virtue. It is only cowardly when honour obliges us to break it; and honour does not oblige us to do so in conversations at which we speak out for mere pleasure's sake. I, more than most men, have expressed my opinion loudly, and often to no purpose; but by God's grace I have generally been very moderate in my way of expressing it. I never like to give offence to any one, and that is why I have passed through many dangers pretty nearly scatheless. Reserve in our opinions, or at least in the way we express them, is an act of prudence in which there is perhaps more heroism than in the hasty expression of our personal feelings. Charity in a Christian is an ointment which goes far in smoothing matters, and in smoothing them brings them nearer the peaceful realm of truth.

I trust, my dear friend, that your stay at Pisa will do you good. Look after your inner life; walk about; read those old books which are out of reach of our present troubles; pray to God, think of me, and be sure that I will never forget you a single day of my life.

LXX. Sickness in Exile—The Gift of Faith

Sorèze, November 15, 1855.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I did not wonder at the fit of melancholy you felt on setting foot in a strange land. When a man travels in foreign countries out of curiosity, rapidly, or for some purpose which attracts him and fills his thoughts, he can easily put up with absence from his native land. It is not quite the same when he goes there in bad health, to stay in one place without knowing what will happen to him, or how long he will have to stay. Such a prospect weighs heavily on one's spirits, and offers no compensation for the absence of one's family and friends, and of that strange influence which makes one's native place, however ill-favoured it may be, sweeter than any other. That is why I should have liked you not to have left France. Hyères offered everything you needed for your recovery. But since the step is taken, you must not knock under, and must boldly fight down home-sickness. God will help you, if you ask Him; and the thought of me, although a very small matter compared with that of God, will also contribute its share.

I liked that visit of yours to the military hospital in order to overcome your low spirits. You are quite right: it is the sight of great sufferings which shows us most clearly our own ingratitude to God. For, however unhappy we may sometimes be, what are our misfortunes in comparison with those suffered by so many others, whether

in body or mind? We have the faith. How priceless is that single gift! The more I get to know men, the greater becomes the strange thrill inspired within me by that thought—I have the faith! The Epistles of St Paul, which I read every day from choice, make me more and more in love with truth. It is an ocean, of which God is the shore.

Good-bye, my very dear friend; do not forget me in your exile, as I shall not forget you, however far away you may be.—I was wrong to say you are far away, for you are very near me.

LXXI. Soreze

Sorèze, November 25, 1855.

We have just finished a retreat which has yielded most happy results. It is the opinion of all that never before did the school offer a more edifying sight, and all are agreed that, if the year continues as it has begun, our school will have no reason to be jealous of better foundations.

How often did I miss you at that beautiful time! I often think of you, and I talk about you as often as I can. So far from becoming forgotten, you are even taking a stronger hold on my thoughts. I am confident that God has chosen you to work for His Son's sake, and that sooner or later you will overcome the difficulties which now beset you.

LXXII. God's Will

Sorèze, January 3, 1856.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter of December 5 was reproving me from my portfolio, when that of the twenty-sixth came to fill up the measure of my ingratitude. So, notwithstanding all the work of the New Year, I cannot forego the pleasure of sending you a few lines of greeting.

How delightfully simple, artless, innocent and everything else you are, to talk to me about writing more books! It is quite clear you are not at the mercy of two hundred schoolboys, who have a right to walk into your room from morning till night about most important trifles, and then to bring down upon your head, at the moment you least expect it, a serious, perhaps a very serious, matter, which racks you to know whether to be firm or lenient, severe or kind. Let me tell you, Monsieur le Malade, that I have never been able to do two things at the same time, and that is precisely the reason of my being in good health without having to spend my time in idlenesss. If I were to do what you say, I should write a very imperfect book, and make a school even worse than the book.

But, you say, years are stealing by, one's hair is growing grey! That is true, and it would really weigh on my mind if my own will had brought me here. As I am certain that it is by God's will that I am here, I abandon myself to His adorable guidance, leaving to Him my years for what they are worth, and my purposes

for what they are worth too. Doubtless, if I were my own master, I should immediately shut myself up and take part in the great religious and political questions of the day; but God has not so willed it. Since 1830, just a quarter of a century ago, my life has been a continual strain, without leisure, without a distinct horizon, without ties, almost without a country. I have been driven like a leaf before the wind, and I have got so used to this, that Sorèze, where I should like to die, only seems to me like a tent for the day. God will tear me away from it as He has done from everything else, and it is not likely that He will do so in order to let me write in peace in a room of my own choosing.

Don't urge me, then, either to write or to love you. The former I can't do, the latter I do already.

I think you read the "Correspondant." M. de Montalembert has published in it a remarkable and bold article on England, in two parts. Things are getting better defined. At least people will know that all Catholics are not enemies to nature, to freedom and to the past.

I greet you with the affection due to one's child and friend.

LXXIII. On Kindness and Firmness in Education

Sorèze, January 20, 1856.

SIR,—The advice you ask me for in your letter is already written in your heart as a father and a Christian. In education two things are necessary—kindness and firmness. We must avoid

both that idolatry which is ever forgiving and ever fondling, as well as the sternness which, when unbending, repels and hardens the heart. In our times education is chiefly spoilt by softness. Formerly perhaps people were more severe than was needed; to-day they are not severe enough. I think it desirable not to keep a child too long in the enervating shelter of his home. At seven years of age princes used to be handed over from women's charge to a tutor. That is about the age at which a child ought to be weaned from the comforts of family life, to be trained under masters and in company with his fellows to learning and the trials of life. Up to that age it is the duty of the mother to fashion his soul to kindness, trustfulness and piety, those unfading impressions which she alone by God's help can engrave upon it.

These are, Sir, very simple, common-place truths, but a feeling of kindness, which I appreciate, prompted you to come to me for them. Allow me to thank you very kindly for it.

LXXIV. Sufficient for the Day is the Evil thereof

Sorèze, February 7, 1856.

I DID not know, my dear friend, what had become of you. Your letter tells me you are at Rome. You did well to leave Pisa, since the air did not suit you; but I am doubtful whether that of Rome will agree with you, at least during the summer, which has always seemed to me intolerable in that city. Moreover, it is very difficult in Rome,

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in the midst of strangers, to keep one's peace of body and soul. One is obliged to see and to talk a great deal, and weary oneself out. Perhaps on the other hand you will find there what you are looking for by an instinct which you cannot define. You require, besides nature and books, the charm of conversation and the flow of ideas. But time will tell whether Rome agrees as well with your body as with your heart. I only beg you not to hold out against your experience, and to come back to us as soon as it is clear that Italy is not doing you any good.

It is very nice of you to tell me again about the book you would like to see me write.* In the meantime here is a little news: I have promised the "Correspondant" my eight unpublished Conferences at Toulouse. You know that they were the beginning of my Moral Sermons. The first will appear on March 25, and so on every two months. So you see that is at least something. I do not know when the rest will come. You talk very glibly about my leisure. If you only knew the everlasting cares which surround me! It is not only big matters which fill up one's time; a constant succession of little things does it perhaps even more. How many hours are taken up by letters, interviews, trifles! How many more given up to thinking and planning! Then contradictions put us out, miscalculations and disappointments try us. Be assured, my dear friend, that I have got a pretty big load on my shoulders, and that it would be really difficult for me to carry another on the top of it.

True, the thought of writing for God in my

* "Lettres à un Jeune Homme sur la Vie Chrétienne."

study attracts me much. But shall I ever get such a time of rest combined with quiet and useful activity? I don't know. My poor life is going as it came. It is no use talking to me about my youth. True, I still have a certain amount of energy left, and judging by the ordinary run of things, a few years still to run; but they will soon have run out, and probably before I am able to do what you want me.

Write to me soon, give me plenty of news about yourself, and be assured of my constant affection.

LXXV. Party Violence—Peace in God

Sorèze, March 31, 1856.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You did well to check yourself. The subject you took up was a delicate one, at least in the shape adopted by you. You have plenty of time before you; be patient and learn to wait for the time when you will be more free and more master of your own thoughts. What you have seen around you is but the usual sight afforded by the world. Formerly persecution of unpopular views was much worse even than to-day; cabals and parties had means at their disposal which they have no longer. Now-a-days they can do little more than utter insults and calumny.

In this regard, do not admire me for keeping quiet at the attacks made upon what I said of of Ozanam's share in the foundation of the Society of St Vincent of Paul. I know nothing of these, or at least I only know them by the answers made to them. The *Gazette de Lyon* has

lately published several articles in support of the truth; and I have had sent to me the original of a declaration signed by the members of the first Paris conference at Saint-Étienne du Mont, instead of Ozanam's first four colleagues, who are still living. Those four keep silence, whether it be that their former relations oblige them to do so, or that they are unwilling to assume the title of founders with Ozanam.

I told you that my silence was not very meritorious, since I did not know of the attacks. It is not mere pride on my part. If I had to face opponents whom I thought sincere, and whose opinions I valued, I should deem it my duty to answer and explain. But in such a case as this! When I see men trample upon a beloved and venerated tomb, because the great servant of God whose remains lie there did not share in the apostasy and ravings of our self-styled champions of the Church, I do not feel even contempt: "I look and pass on," according to Dante's advice.

Moreover, late events have thoroughly disenchanted me with this world and its opinions; I only live in the future and in eternity. There vanish all the empty quarrels of parties; there we gain strength not even to heed them. When a traveller is crossing the Alps, there comes a moment when the first breezes from Italy tell him that he is near that great and lovely country; he stops to breathe the scented air, and forgets the chilly blasts he has just left behind him. Oh, how good God is to those who seek none save Him! Try, my dear child, to live in such a region as that, and to enjoy there great peace of mind—not indeed so as to be lulled to sleep

in false repose, but rather to gain from it strength to wait, to believe and to fight. Watch over your words; do not multiply your interests. Rome is a tomb, the tomb of the martyrs, and we should seek our refuge there. As for me, I only saw the Pope; I held aloof from every one and everything else. It was being alone that rescued me from my enemies—it is still my refuge to-day.

Good-bye, my dear friend. The weather is mild now; I hope you will soon come to Sorèze to ask me once more for your two treatises, and also for the welcome which my heart always has ready for you.

LXXVI. A Letter of Sympathy

Sorèze, August 23, 1856.

SIR,—I do not think I can be wrong in supposing that a notice "de faire part"* which bears at the head the name of R—— de S—— has been sent to me by a young man whom I formerly knew in Paris, who no doubt married some time after I left, and who has lost thus early the companion with whom he had joined his lot. If that is so, you have my very hearty sympathy in your loss. You have been tried at an early age; but you have the faith, and with it strength from God. That will help you to bear up and will console you, so far as one can be consoled in such heavy and such lawful sorrow. . . .

* A notice sent round to relatives and friends on the occasion of a death.

LXXVII. "Judge not"—Evangelical Sweetness

Sorèze, August 24, 1856.

WHAT you tell me touching your relations with M. —— gives me much pleasure. You see how cautious we must be in judging souls, and how just are our Lord's words, "Judge not." We priests, who have to do with souls and know their secrets, cannot be like people in the world, whose judgements are so quick and so cruel. You have yourself received insight into a soul of which you had judged unfavourably; and you thought he was very near to God, or at least was acting in obedience to His grace, and you appreciated at its real value the behaviour of those who, instead of giving him encouragement, loaded him with bitterness and insult.

That will be a lasting lesson for you, my dear friend. It will teach you the value of that kindness of heart which seeks for good qualities rather than bad, which clings more readily to hope than to fear, and which instead of irritating wounds, dresses them with the oil of the good Samaritan. One of my sweetest consolations in the decline of my career is the certainty of never having insulted or galled any one even whilst defending the truth energetically and passionately. I scarcely remember ever having spoken harshly, except in the case of a few princes of our time; and, if I did so then, I think the frightful persecutions carried on by Russia, Holland and other countries, against our breth-

ren, gave occasion for doing so. They who persecute openly certainly have no right to the same gentle treatment as other stray souls; and I am sure that among our contemporaries no one's conversion will have been endangered or delayed through any fault of mine.

Your "Two Roses" seem charming to me. I have put them into a little corner where I keep a very few things which I value very highly.

Good-bye, my very dear friend.

LXXVIII. Attention to Health—Overtures about the French Academy

Sorèze, November 10, 1856.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter told me you were leaving for Rome, and now you are expecting there my answer, which is rather late. Here it is.

Let me first of all tell you that I am delighted at the good news you give me of your health. You are better: that is indeed something to rejoice at. How glad I should be to see you enjoying the same health and vigour which God has given me! But you must know for your encouragement that I was not always so. At one time I was very delicate, very pale, and quite unable to walk about the streets of Paris. It is living constantly under rule—a life divided between work, travel and rest—which has brought me to my present state of health, not forgetting a delightful illness which, when I was thirty-nine, cleared me of an old leaven which

was doubtless working in my body. I beg you, therefore, to get into a regular, simple and quiet way of living. Never work at night; sleep your sleep through. There is no use in killing oneself through writing, instead of attaining seventy years of well employed life. It is wonderful what good use may be made of our time, if we have patience enough to wait and not hurry.

I am very grateful to M. Ampère for thinking of me. I have already been spoken to about the French Academy. I did not decline the overtures, because it seems to me that religion would gain by having if possible a religious in the first literary body in the world.

This same feeling, as well as that of civic duty, made me accept a seat in the Constituent Assembly; and, notwithstanding my being obliged to resign it, since I found myself in a false position, I have never repented having taken my place there for a moment, in view of the revolution. Neither do our rules forbid the acceptance of literary honours, and I do not think that our Most Reverend Master General would refuse me the authorization I should require from him. You may be sure that all this springs from no preconceived shifts or desires. I only thought of the Academy at the moment it was mentioned to me.

Our centenary will take place on Wednesday, the 11th of August next. I hope, my dear friend, you will manage to be at it. You are down on the list of friends of the school. We will keep a room for you, as well as for all our guests who come from a distance. You will receive in due time the official invitation, and later on the programme of the festival, if you accept it.

I laughed heartily at your taunt about my administrative gruffness. Write frequently to me, without being intimidated by my dignity of pedagogue, and be assured that I look upon you with the affection of an ordinary mortal.

LXXIX. On the Death of a Soreze Pupil

Sorèze, March 17, 1857.

Sir,—Since the blow which has fallen on us as well as on you, I have many times thought of writing to you, but each time I felt my powerlessness to console a father in such great and lawful sorrow, and I preferred not to reopen by my words so fresh a wound. Still, I venture to do so, and to tell you again how deeply I felt the blow which deprived you of a son, and ourselves of a pupil whom we loved. I may even say that never before have I been so keenly and deeply moved; and every time I recall that dear child's death-bed I feel once more overcome. He was the first of our pupils to be taken from me by death, and I could scarcely have believed that the ties which bound us were so strong. It is true that the poor young fellow was under my spiritual direction, and that through such confidential intimacy he filled a great place very near my heart. You had formed within him a truly Christian spirit, even more so than I thought. His faith and piety during that sad passage were extraordinary, and God sustained him during it by an intervention of His grace, which one may almost describe as visible.

That must be to you, Sir, a ground not only of hope but of certainty, and also the greatest

consolation. For one who knows life and all its perils, it is hard to feel confident that a young man will come safely through them all, and that he will always be able to meet death with a clear conscience and with peace in his soul.

To die young and stainless is one of God's graces. Reason does not tell us so, but faith does; and your faith is great enough to understand what I say. I hope, therefore, that it will triumph in this trial, and that you will receive upon the head of your second son the blessings of your eldest, and also the merits of his death.

LXXX. Live in the Future

Sorèze, June 9, 1857.

DEAR FRIEND,—You are good and kind in what you tell me. I should be glad to see you every day, and I can scarcely get you once a year. God, who brought us together, has now parted us, and I do not know whether He will ever again unite us for long together.

Our present trial may last a long time; and if any sudden event brings us out of it, no one can say what the result may be. France and Europe are too far from Jesus Christ, the living Rock, to build up anything lasting. Where there is no belief in Christ, faith becomes weak and vacillating, having no sure foundation. Now we cannot hope that this divine faith will suddenly regain its ground. Great catastrophes stir men for a moment; nations lift up their head, look around and hearken; then drop back again, at the first glimpse of peace, into their former listlessness. So we must make a sacrifice of the

present and look to the future. The future, however distant it may be, is still mankind, and affords even a finer field, since it calls for greater foresight and faith. When I read some beautiful passage from an ancient author, I marvel at his power at such a distance from his own time. Jerusalem, Athens, Plato, Cicero, still stir us; and although we cannot all claim that our thoughts shall shine for all time, we can at least leave our bones in the balance of good. Moreover, the soul sees and acts from on high; it leaves a trace, however faint, in the events which spring up from age to age, and if it be prepared to help them forward in the direction of truth and justice, it rejoices as though privileged to take part in deeds that are immortal.

So live in the future; it is our great refuge and our great lever. Consider how God has lived in the future! Think how He still lives in the future!

I will make an engagement with you for the 11th of August, and greet you affectionately.

LXXXI. To a Pupil of Soreze

Sorèze, August 24, 1857.

My dear Friend.—I did, as a matter of fact, pass close to your place, and I was tempted to go and see you; but I was in a hurry and with others, and I confined myself to taking a side-glance at your home. It was not much, but nevertheless it was something substantial enough to recall with pleasure.

So you have launched out into the world! The only link between you and your early youth

is the memory of the past. I trust its fruits will not perish in you, that you will remain a strong Christian, and that you will never forget the master who sought to lead you on to good. For my part, my dear friend, I shall always remember the days we passed together, and the consolation you afforded me in what was for me a new and difficult career. I remain sincerely attached to you, whether you remain in the world, or whether your vocation become stronger and lead you back to my side by another road. I have but one wish in this regard: it is that you may know God's will clearly, and have the courage to follow it, whatever it may be. Good-bye.

LXXXII. God's Help

Sorèze, September 7, 1857.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I knew of your success even before I got your letter of the 2nd. It did not surprise me, for you had worked hard during the year, and it gave me great pleasure both for your own sake and the school's. Then your letter, by giving me a proof of your kind remembrance, brought me real joy.

I always felt affection for you, for I was convinced that your spirit was upright and honourable; and the severity to which you sometimes drove me gave me much pain. The sentiments you express prove that I judged you aright. You are at the same time both good and weak. In the world, therefore, you will have to watch over yourself and to cleave steadily to the religious practices of which you have felt the

happy fruits. If you are faithful to them, your character will become nobler and stronger. If you mend what faults you may commit, they will not bear the same evil results that they work in souls in whom God is not present and His influence is not felt. You will take advantage of whatever experiences life may bring you, so as to draw ever nearer to Him in whom you will always find light and strength and consolation.

You may be sure, my dear friend, of the affectionate interest I take in you.

LXXXIII. Against Ennui and Low Spirits—To a Pupil of Soreze

Sorèze, November 2, 1857.

My very dear Child,—Your letter crossed mine, which you must have received by this. Your first sentence was a sad one, and that is natural. I have never gone to live at a new place without experiencing great depression of spirits. Besides, neither the past nor the future attach you to your new life. You have adopted it out of obedience and not conviction, whilst at Sorèze your memories, your affections and plans kept your heart always warm, and kept you from feeling each day's burden. But, my dear child, you must not give way to these first impressions. You must set to work in good earnest, and range yourself more resolutely than ever on the side of God. It is there that all should gather, but you especially, since you have received in a greater degree than others the gift of knowing and lov-

ing the things of the unseen and eternal order. After having been your consolation at Sorèze, God must be your strength in your new position. Carefully read the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles. As time goes on you will find there a delicious bread which will give you a distaste for all other food. Think, too, of me, who shall never cease to love you.

LXXXIV. Advice to a Young Man on Paris Life

Sorèze, November 2, 1857.

MY DEAR SIR AND FORMER PUPIL,—I have handed over to the Institute of Sorèze your request to be admitted as a member of the Sorèze Association. It considered your request in its capacity of Committee of the Association, and elected you. The membership card will shortly be forwarded to you. I was pleased at this mark of your attachment to the school, and trust that some day it will again see you within its walls.

Since you ask me for advice on the occasion of your shortly going to Paris, I send you the following. I should recommend you first of all to go and see the Rev. Father Chocarne, who was at one time your chaplain. He is at present prior of our house in Paris, near the Luxembourg, and would be very glad to see you. The first thing every Christian ought to have, wherever he may be, is a father, a master, a spiritual friend. That is the first thing you have to find. You need a heart devoted to you and able to

keep you in the right path. Then you must have the society of young men of your own age. Chance may throw you in the way of a good set, but it may also throw you into company unworthy of you.

By becoming a member of a conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul you will be sure to be doing right. There is also near our house a society of students called the "Cercle Catholique," where, if you become a member, you will find a library, rooms for games and conversation, and every kind of help towards passing your spare time pleasantly and virtuously.

If you think well, Father Chocarne would readily introduce you to the president of the club. I would write to him myself were it not that the Father I have just named represents me with those for whom I have affection, and will do everything I would have done myself.

Such, my dear friend, is my advice. If you follow it, you will cling fast to the good principles which you drank in at Sorèze school, and those principles, by shielding your morals and strengthening your character, will enable you to escape the perils of the liberty upon which you are about to enter.

If you issue from it faithful, good and religious, your whole life will benefit by it; you will be thoroughly grounded in the principles of truth and honour. Alas! how many young men like you fall away without wishing to do so, from weakness in which they do not know where to look for support, which is increased by their pleasures, and which, having become by habit a second nature, leaves them no last resource but

those final graces which God sometimes grants at the hour of death! I trust that will not be your case. You will fight against self; you will remember your Sorèze days and the affection I bore you, and I shall some day find you what I hope you will be.

I commend you to God, your best friend, and tell you once more of my devoted affection for you.

LXXXV. Education—Protestantism

Sorèze, December 9, 1857.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I got your three letters. As you have been informed, our retreat went off very well, and I have never yet seen at Sorèze so beautiful a general communion. Many of the old pupils who were hitherto considered the worst have been completely changed. It is not the first time, thank God, that I have witnessed such transformations, which shows me how very slow we must be in giving up all hope for a pupil and in branding him as an incorrigible. So long as his expulsion is not absolutely necessary, he ought to be kept, watched, and prayed for. A master's greatest consolation is precisely the conversion of the bad, just as God's greatest consolation is, according to the Gospel, the return of sinners.

You now see clearly the results of an education different from that which you yourself received—the entire want not only of religion but of noble thoughts, sheer materialism and untold degradation of the soul. You must not be astonished if you meet with young Protestants

whose faith and mind are in a better state. There are sincere Protestants just as certainly as there are good Catholics. It is probable that those of whom you speak were brought up in their families, or under saving influences, just as you yourself were. It may even be that, humanly speaking, the Protestant faith is easier to keep than our own, precisely because it is in great part *human*, and requires from nature very slight sacrifices outside the common moral law. That is undoubtedly one of the things which upholds Protestantism. It gives religion in *small doses*, and that suits minds for which reason is not enough and real faith a great deal too much.

LXXXVI. Father de Ravignan

Sorèze, March 9, 1858.

My dear Friend,—M. de Montalembert had already given me the same hint as yourself on the occasion of Father de Ravignan's death; and when your letter came my MS. was just starting for Paris. So you may make your mind easy; it is done, and that with hearty good will. I had no constant intercourse with Father de Ravignan, but it was always a pleasure to see him. Besides, we not only belonged to the same pulpit, but also had a common sphere of action, notwithstanding the *nuances* which always distinguish men one from another.

His death is a very great loss, although the state of his health did not allow him to act up to the intensity of his zeal. Our ranks are daily thinning; those ranks of the second period of the nineteenth century, in which we won freedom

for religious life and freedom of education. A third period has begun; God alone knows what it will be, and what men He will give us for His work!*

* The following lines are taken from the article of which Lacordaire writes in the above letter. It appeared in the "Correspondant" of March 25, 1858.

"Father de Ravignan exchanged for the religious habit the magisterial robes which he had worn in the world; and when, after a long hidden probation, he once more appeared before men, the ripeness of his sacrifice was shown in talents and in virtues which overspread the life which he had embraced. Though long a stranger to renown, he now received it with modesty and dignity; and without seeking by a single word to catch the fickle breath of popular favour, he was always supported in his apostleship by the regard which he won from all. Revolutions never ruffled the quiet surface of his life of sacrifice; he saw them pass by, like a shepherd who watches over his flock in the heights and sees the storm raging in the plains below. While others were thrown into panic by the thunderclaps, he feared them not, and, continuing his work in God's sight, shed around his own person that security which is always enjoyed by those whose life is set higher than the times in which they live. We might have wished for greater eagerness in the advance, but not for more stedfastness at his post of duty. Moreover, he would take others into his counsel; he would inspire with his authority those whose position in the conflict was more advanced than his own; and while his moderation fostered charity, it never promoted faint-heartedness. . . .

"Having worn out his weak bodily health by the costly triumphs of his oratory, he went back to the solitude of the religious cell. No burden of office was laid upon his old age; no fresh honour replaced the crown which had been taken from his brow. Of the glory he had achieved he kept only his forgetfulness of self; his nigh spent strength he could only devote to that service of souls which survived all else in his priestly heart and drew from him his last breath in the cause of charity. 'People envy us much,' Mgr de Quélen once said to me in that magnificent archiepiscopal palace of which there no longer remains a stone upon a stone; 'people envy us much when they see us in these grand rooms; but they do not know what we give up when we become bishops. It is communion with souls that is the priest's true—nay, his only—consolation. What beautiful souls we come across!' Father de Ravignan enjoyed that divine consolation to the end of his life. Souls

M. de Montalembert had spoken to me about the words used by the Bishop of Orleans. Thank you for sending them to me. Had it not been for you, I should probably not have heard them, or at least have heard them too late. I have written to thank him.

My publisher is binding a set of my works for the Holy Father. I intend sending them, with a letter, through the Paris Nunciature, unless you know a better way. It seems to me the simplest and the most usual for all kinds of communications.

The young man of my "Lettres sur la Vie Chrétienne" will be called Emmanuel; it is a scriptural name, and seemed to me a fitting one. Moreover, it is that of a young man who has just left Sorèze, to whom I was attached for his piety and good disposition.

Good-bye, my dear friend. I embrace you tenderly in Him whom we both serve.

LXXXVII. The Classics—To a Pupil of Soreze

Sorèze, June 25, 1858.

YOUR short stay at the school a month ago gave me great consolation. I have forgotten all that ever gave me pain, and am convinced of the uprightness and goodness of your heart. I quite approve of your intention of collecting the

were naturally drawn to him. He loved them and they loved him. Let us leave him to sleep amid the blessings of the grave. He is happier than we, for he sees the Master whom he served; and henceforth it is from the realm of certainty that he looks upon the future which is in store for us."

classics of our language; it would do you no harm to add to them one or two Latin authors, for instance, Virgil and Tacitus, and a few of Cicero's treatises. The reading of the classics not only forms the taste, but gives nobility to the mind, and keeps it from sinking to the level of the merely material and commonplace. Every famous man has been fond of literature. The reading of the Bible will be very wholesome for you, and I strongly recommend it.

You did not say anything about your actual religious practices. You should have a regular time for your confessions and communions, and in general for all your religious practices, of whatever kind they may be. Regularity and perseverance alone take one far.

Good-bye, my dear friend. Pray for me. Do not be unmindful of the graces God has given you.

LXXXVIII. On the Choice of a Friend

Sorèze, July 13, 1858.

MY DEAR CHILD,—I don't see any harm in your liking one of your companions more than another, provided that your affection keeps sincere and pure. It is even difficult to like many persons quite equally; nature is opposed to such symmetry; she nearly always leans to one side more than the other. It is enough if even in the warmest affections we remain masters of ourselves and submissive in everything to God's law, for we must love God above all things, and never break His commandments for the sake of any one. When one of your companions offers you his friendship and asks you for yours, you

should see carefully what he is, and not look only to outward advantage. If he is thoroughly Christian and virtuous and of good dispositions, and if you, on the other hand, feel yourself drawn towards him by ties of honourable sympathy, nothing prevents you from responding. But in that case you should be constant, and be careful not to pass from one friendship to another, which is a mark of a frivolous heart and of one incapable of feeling deeply.

LXXXIX. The Joys of a Pure Conscience

Sorèze, September 25, 1858.

My dear Friend,—What you tell me about your faithfulness to your religious duties and of your resistance to the attacks of the evil spirit gives me great consolation. I can truly say that I have the heart of a father for you, on account of your progress in virtue and of the generous way in which you have responded to my care. God has evidently taken you for His own; you love Him, and He loves you. So your heart, my dear child, has become a centre of happiness. All your affections have developed, and it is in them that happiness really lies. Debauchery is nothing more than awful selfishness, which kills all tender and noble feeling within us. If we have true love, so far from wishing to corrupt what we love by vice, we should be ready to die for the object of our worship; and such disinterested purity is rewarded by an enlarging of the soul which is inward joy. That is what you feel, and I myself share in your joy.

XC. Verses on the Death of Christ

Sorèze, October 18, 1858.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—How thankful I was for your kind little thought! I should have answered you immediately, but just fancy, for the last three weeks I have turned into a scribe, into a regular man of business, reading letters, answering them, employing a secretary, and ready to dictate, like Cæsar, to four different persons in as many styles. What will most astonish you is that I have filled the post of business-manager precisely as though I were a supernumerary at the registrar's.

I say to myself, it is God's will, and I am satisfied.

My dear child, listen to this:

Quand le Christ, expirant au sommet du Calvaire,
Sauvait par son amour le genre humain perdu,
La terre s'entr'ouvrit; le soleil éperdu
Détourna sa clarté de ce sanglant mystère;
Le temple se troubla, l'arche du sanctuaire
Apparut vide et nue au peuple confondu;
L'Enfer eut un grand cri, le Ciel un grand silence;
La mort même étonnée adora son vainqueur,
Et tout s'émut enfin excepté le pécheur,
Qui vit mourir son Dieu sans croire à sa présence.

If after that you tell me that I am not a poet, you will clearly be straining the truth.

Good-bye, my very dear child; take care of yourself, let me share in your affection, and above all things admire my poetry.

XCI. The Two Spirits

Sorèze, October 18, 1858.

SIR,—The information contained in the volume you have been so kind as to dedicate to me, was quite unfamiliar to me—the origin of the White Penitents of Avignon, their history, their rules, and the remarkable part taken in that foundation by my ancestors of the Dominican Order. The perusal of your work has touched me deeply. I am convinced, like yourself, Sir, that we must set associations of good to oppose associations of evil, and resist the ravings of pride and of the senses with honest enthusiasm. I never read a sentence of St Paul after reading Cicero without admiring the loftiness and clearness with which the spirit of God has confronted the spirit of man. That single comparison is enough to convince me of the divinity of Christianity. How much more so when I see the difference between the works of reason and those of faith! Your "White Penitents of Avignon" gave me that pleasure. I trust their revival may be worthy of their cradle, and that if princes are no longer to be found wearing their habit, we shall still find beneath it generous souls, who can love Jesus Christ, and bear His shame, as St Paul says, *extra castra*, that is, before the world.

XCII. On the Death of a Young Christian*

Sorèze, December 28, 1858.

MADAM,—M. Heinrich tells me of the blow which has befallen you both. He had bestowed on your son a truly Christian affection, and precious hopes for his faith. All has been shattered by death. It has taken from you a son in the flower of his age, when all his qualities, his piety and talents seemed to promise that he would be your glory, your comfort, your very life. It is a hard blow, madam, and, did you not know God as you do, we should have been afraid that you would not be able to bear it with resignation. But since God Himself suffered the death of His Son, we can draw from so great an example comfort for a mother's heart, and show her that even grief so cruel can be assuaged by faith.

When one loses a son whose future is doubtful, we may believe that God wished to save him, and that death was for him the means and pledge of a happy eternity. When, on the other hand, he was pure and holy, we may believe that he was a victim for the salvation of others, and that his life will be weighed in the balance by which God judges the world. Your son was desirous of serving the Church; he aspired to write for her; he has left behind him traces of the direction of his mind towards the great cause of Christian truth; now, however great and successful his labour might have been,

* Alfred Tonnellé, author of *Fragments sur l'Art et la Philosophie*, published after his death.

could he ever have done better than die young before he had achieved anything? His soul is the work which he has carried before God's face. It is the work which he has left to you, to his friends, to those who had hopes from his talents and from his devotion. One can never do anything better, madam, than die for God. Christianity was founded on sacrifice and martyrdom, and is supported by them. Your mother's grief is joined to your child's sufferings; he has offered your tears to Jesus Christ, and, mingled with his blood, they have wrought joy in heaven and blessings upon earth.

Dwell, madam, on a sweet and pious thought. Follow the Mother of God to Calvary, that in her company you may await the day of the resurrection. Pray excuse these lines which you yourself desired. Although no Christian is a stranger to any other Christian, I would not have ventured to write them had not friendship impelled me. Pray accept them for the motive which dictates them.

XCIII. A Victory for Chastity

Tirlemont, February 6, 1859.

How glad I am, my dear friend, at what you tell me about that poor girl. God will bless the victory you have gained over yourself. However strong your passions may be, never let yourself be persuaded to blight another soul with the dishonour of them in order to lessen in appearance the shame of your own. Happy are they who have never sacrificed another! They are very few. They are very few who will appear

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before God's judgement-seat without ever having caused any other person to fall. Youth is sacred from its very perils: always treat it with reverence. The good done by reverencing it is of a kind that touches most deeply the Divine Heart; for God is everlasting youth, and He takes delight in those who bear for an instant in the swift decay of our mortal life that feature of likeness to Himself.

Good-bye, my dear friend. I expect to return at the middle of April; but of what avail are mere human hopes and plans? God alone knows for what purpose our work is begun and in what way it is finished.

XCIV. Friendly Banter—Soreze again

Sorèze, March 4, 1859.

I AM much grieved, my dear friend, at the loss you have suffered in the death of so good, so charming and so pious a young fellow.* I liked his face so much when you introduced him to me. He is now before God. How quickly things change! You have no one left to be fond of you but myself! Why do you want me to tell you that I do so? Can you not hear me saying so every day? You can have no ear for hearing beyond time and space. Cicero says—I think in "Scipio's Dream"—that the stars make music in their course through the heavens, and that at night they may easily be heard by those who know how to listen. I could bet that you have never heard them, since you do not hear in my heart the music of your name and

* Le Vicomte Herman de Jouffroy, who died at the age of twenty-six, a victim of charity.

memory. I am fond of you, then; I am really fond of you, even though now and again a little dark cloud crosses your face and takes away from you that look of beautiful and unruffled peace which I so much prize.

I have at last got an imperial decree—*an imperial decree*, mind—with my name in full thus set forth—*Le sieur Lacordaire.* You see how high I stand at court! The decree authorises the commune of Sorèze to give me the parish church and the ground in front. I immediately got the front scraped, the walls pointed, the *Place* paved, and at the present moment a beautiful railing is being made which will rest on a course of wrought stone, and will end with a gateway formed by two pedestals, on which we shall put statues of Pepin the Short and Louis XVI, the former having been the founder of the abbey, the latter of the military school of Sorèze. The railing will be up at Easter, and you shall see it with your own bright black eyes this summer, when you are kind enough to come and see me.

I was pleased with Abbé ——'s article in the last number of the "Correspondant," and I heartily approve of your plan of undertaking with him a discussion on the religious questions of the day.

I think the time is coming when we shall have to defend a great many things.

Good-bye, my very dear friend. I love and embrace you as you deserve, that is to say, very tenderly.

XCV. Sacrifice

Sorèze, April 2, 1859.

SIR,—You are the first to tell me of the incident at Notre-Dame (Paris), during a passage in which my name was mentioned. I cannot tell you how touched I am by such a mark of Christian courtesy. I say Christian, because you appeal, not to my pride as a preacher, but to my sentiments of faith and charity. My only regret, in the lonely and happy life which I am leading, is that no longer by my words, and but seldom even by my pen, can I give consolation to those who have the truth, and light to those who seek it. Now would be the time to write in the quiet of one's cell against the multitude of errors and illusions which spring up in our own age, still so sceptical. But God, who nearly thirty years ago set me in the active life, has now plunged me into it deeper than ever towards the close of my career, and I do not know whether He will grant me a few years before the final decline to write as I should like to the glory of His name and of the works which He entrusted to me.

You have raised the misgiving within me by letting me know that I am not yet forgotten and that perhaps my voice might be of use to many. But the misgiving is free from any bitterness, for it makes me conscious that I am not doing what I should myself like, and am, therefore, really living in a state of sacrifice for God's sake. Called by my duties as religious superior and head of a school to require many a sacrifice from

others, it is a consolation to me to feel that I am making one myself. That gives me both strength and reward.

Thank you, Sir, for the thought which led you to communicate with me; and may God, whom you love, bless all that you love in Him and with Him.

XCVI. Flowers, Fruit and School-Boys

Sorèze, June 15, 1859.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter announced the coming of some dahlias; they have come, and were long ago planted in the flower garden. M. de T—— told me they would be very fine, but they are not coming forward quickly, although we are having alternate heat and rain.

In the same letter you propose planting an orchard at Sorèze in part of the park. It is true our vines have succeeded wonderfully in the corner where we planted them. At their third season they were covered with quantities of fine grapes, which I was glad to have on our table in September. But this privileged corner, sheltered from the sea-breeze, is the only well protected one in the park. Where could we plant trees which would withstand such a blighting wind? Then comes the question of the boys. Although the school is well behaved and is now all that it ought to be, we ought not to expose the youngsters to those little temptations to gluttony. Outside the park we should have to rent an enclosure, and God only knows whether any fruit would then be left us. Well, when you come to see us, you will perhaps find a means of

carrying out your plan, of which I feel all the importance.

Our distribution of prizes will take place on Tuesday, August 10. I shall leave the next day to visit our convents and colleges, and on September 21 I will go back to St-Maximin. In case I cannot see you at Sorèze, we shall at least meet there.

XCVII. To the Novices of the Order of St Dominic

Sorèze, July 11, 1859.

VERY DEAR CHILDREN IN OUR LORD,—I got on my birthday, with the liveliest consolation, the good wishes you sent me collectively. Your filial spirit towards me is not the only thing in your letter which touches me; your devotion to our order, to our dear province, to your own solid progress in the virtues of the religious life touch me too. I am firmly convinced that God has raised up our province of France to serve some day as a cradle for the restoration of our order. Though still young and feeble, it will gradually grow by the spirit of regular observance, of simplicity, of apostolic work, of self-denial and mortification; and lastly by hearty and united efforts to form and maintain the traditions of the province. For my part, during the years which Providence may yet give me, I will do all in my power to promote the good observance and the increase of the flock.

I recommend myself personally to your good prayers.

XCVIII. On Youthful Passions—A Soul in the Balance

Sorèze, September 14, 1859.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I learned with joy from your letter that you had lately been to your religious duties. That piece of good news really touched me, first for its own sake, and secondly because it proved to me that you were faithful to your promises, in spite of the seductions of the society in which you move. I am convinced that if you could go to confession and communion once a month, wherever or in whatever position you might be, you would be safe. Your first letter, telling me of the lukewarmness into which you had fallen since the vacation, gave me a great deal of pain, and I doubted whether you would have the courage to keep your promise during the month of September. It was therefore a great comfort to me to find that I was wrong.

You have very strong passions, which are sensual rather than noble, untamed pride, an extravagant love of the world, a yearning for ease and luxury, and, lastly, means of gratifying every desire; that is the anxious side of your character and your position. On the other hand, your faith is pure and genuine, you fear God and His justice, you have begun to understand the mystery of redemption through the cross of Jesus Christ, and, last of all, your heart, which had long been cold and selfish, seemed to me to be responding to impressions of devotion and friendship: that is the hopeful side. You have

still a great deal to do. More than once, you will excuse my saying so, I began to be anxious about you. The first letter you wrote me was that of a heartless wretch; the last two comforted me, and showed me I was mistaken about you. So long as you open your mind to me, and are not repelled by the frankness with which I shall lay bare your faults and your vices, nothing will go wrong; but so soon as you begin to chafe under my direction, pride and sensuality will overpower you, and you will become capable of anything, save perhaps of sinning against the world's code of honour. I say *perhaps*, because the gulf into which a soul is plunged when cut off from God and under no constraint to work for its daily bread, is bottomless. Oh, how I long to save you! How I despaired of you! How I have tried to let you see what Jesus Christ is! I could have no greater consolation than to see you a real Christian, and since you will doubtless never return me all the affection I bear you, I shall be satisfied with knowing that you really love and serve God.

Good-bye. I speak frankly to you, and you must get used to it; for correspondence which is not frank is worth neither the paper nor the time given to it. I must tell you again of the joy your two last letters gave me.

XCIX. Encouragement in the Struggle

Sorèze, September 27, 1859.

My dear Friend,—On my arrival at Sorèze yesterday I found your letter. It convinced me of two things—of your conversion and of your affection. I am sure you are converted to God,

since you speak humbly of yourself, and, not satisfied with knowing the misery and littleness of man in general, you recognize those two things in yourself, which no man can do unless enlightened by the grace of Jesus Christ. You were a selfish and vain child, wrapped up in yourself, delighting in your name, your rank, your fortune, your horses, and subject, notwithstanding your pride, to all the movements of depraved flesh. Now, although there still remain in you traces of the sinful man, you have become humble and chaste, and therefore a lover of God instead of a lover of yourself. That is why you are really converted, and you have nothing to do but to keep the road you have taken, advancing by the same means that took you to it.

Then, again, my dear friend, I am convinced of your affection, because you speak to me with simplicity and from your heart. So, for the future, I should consider myself gravely at fault to be anxious about you, notwithstanding your youth and your former powerlessness to love sincerely because you loved yourself alone. See how I talk! Freedom, a holy freedom, seems to me to be the best proof of attachment to another man. We talk plainly only to those we love. Besides, with me you are as yet only a child, and you are also my penitent. These two reasons, setting aside the claim of friendship, would entitle me to treat you with the freedom I do. When you find my letters too severe, you may pay me out by burning them. I shall see you again soon, and we will go thoroughly into the question of your studies.

Good-bye, my very dear friend. I embrace you with the conviction that I know and love you.

C. On Friendship in Jesus Christ

Sorèze, October 11, 1859.

DID you notice what I said just now—*My dear Father?* You have, in fact, become my father, since you consented to look after the spiritual welfare of my soul. I do not know whether you are like myself, but I can no longer become attached to anyone without the soul slipping in behind the heart, with Jesus Christ to bind us together. Communications no longer seem to me intimate, unless they become supernatural; for what intimacy can there be if we do not sound the depths of those thoughts and affections which fill the soul with God? I am aware that friends do not confess to one another, do not help one another in their penances, but rather hide their spiritual life from all eyes, even of those they love best. But is that really friendship? Is not friendship the entire gift of oneself? and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has become one with ourselves, can we really give ourselves without giving Him who forms but one with us? How can conscience be excluded from the gift of oneself if that gift be complete? And how give one's conscience without a confession of all that is good and bad within us? It is such a sweet thing to humble ourselves before those we love. And if pride keeps us back, if we put on a mask even in presence of a friend, do we love him? It is certain that confidence is the first element of friendship; one might even say that it is but the threshold of it, for sacrifice is the sanctuary:

now, does confidence exist where there is no confession, and is confession anything else but supernatural confidence?

It was then quite natural that you should become my *Father* on the day when Jesus Christ gave you His priesthood, and on which you received power to absolve me and to wipe out my faults with His blood.

I am now thinking about death, and I imagine nothing can be sweeter in death than to be assisted by a priest who is our friend. Friendship makes it so easy to be frank and humble and to unbosom oneself. What a grace to die in the arms of one who has the same faith as ourselves, who is acquainted with our conscience, and who loves us!

CI. On Fidelity in Friendship

Sorèze, October 20, 1859.

My dear Friend,—Your letter, in which you tell me of your distress at my silence, crossed the answer you were expecting. That is why I was less quick in consoling you for my silence, which you see had no hidden cause. I was tempted to answer you by the single sentence, "Modicæ fidei, quare dubitasti?" How could you have misgivings about me? You know how thoroughly yours I am by nature and by grace. Don't give way then to such uneasiness any more, since it does so much harm without any good ground. Fidelity is my most innate virtue, in friendship as well as in my convictions; and a man who has sacrificed his belief or his love is to me an object of invincible repulsion. For that reason

nothing has of late more grieved me than the fickleness of souls. There are doubtless lawful conversions; but how many things are necessary to make a conversion honest and admissible! One might almost say that God alone has the right of conversion, and that He alone can make it holy.

Your change of life, my very dear friend, naturally saddens you. You used to live in your family, in the midst of tender affection; to-day you are alone, in a room of your own, and, what is unpardonable, you don't tell me where that room is, so that I do not know where to fix my thoughts on you. I was even afraid that my letter, addressed to your former residence, had not reached you. Relieve me of this fear promptly, and tell me what lucky street has received your household gods.

Tell me, too that my letter consoled you a little, and that you are no longer in that fit of melancholy. As for myself, I still have an occasional attack of it, the remains of the old man; but as I advance in years I feel my manhood grow stronger as well as my disposition to rise superior to whatever may happen. I have often thought that all I have done may be destroyed, and I am forming the habit of making a sacrifice of it in thought, provided God and my friends do not abandon me. It even seems to me—although that would be the hardest blow of all—that if I had to sacrifice my friendships, I should not be unable to bear it. Alas, how many broken friendships have I experienced in my life Friendship is an old tree on which I can only count as my own a few autumn leaves. Shall I see them fall?

CII. Italian Independence and the Temporal Sovereignty of the Pope

Sorèze, November 5, 1859.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—In the questions which have been mooted for nearly a year I have been guided by a twofold love, love for the Papacy and love for Italy; and I have never had any trouble in reconciling the two. It seemed to me just that Italy should win back her independence from the foreigners who were oppressing her; very just, too, that she should demand and get a more liberal system of government than that to which the domination of Austria had condemned her; but, on the other hand, I considered it very just too and very desirable that the Papacy should keep its temporal dominions. These two causes were, in my opinion, only separated through misunderstandings and accidents, and I relied on Providence for the triumph of them both. Was that the intention of the French Government? I believed so without venturing to assert it. In case it were not its intention, I trusted in a power stronger than its own to thwart its policy. Whatever the issue, fortunate or disastrous, I remained true to the twin pole-star of my convictions: the independence and freedom of Italy and the preservation of the temporal dominions of the Papacy. Man cannot command facts, but he can always in his heart keep principles inviolate. If Italy finally throws off the yoke of Austria, if she gets a government in conformity with her lawful aspirations, and if, at the same time,

Rome is safeguarded, I shall thank God for it. If, on the other hand, either of those causes shall fail through men's fault, I shall regret and deplore it, but I shall not be accountable for it, since I shall have done all that in my position I could do for the sake of justice and truth.

It is true that there are in Italy both demagogues and absolutists; but between these two parties, just as in France herself, there are a great number of honest Christian men who wish for the good of the Church and that of Italy; who do not hold them to be incompatible, and who are working for both ends. The future is in their hands, whatever may be the illusions into which they may be driven for a moment by the excesses either of demagogues or absolutists.

As for yourself, my dear friend, keep calm and self-controlled. I am glad that both in body and soul you are more or less alone; for nothing is more fatal than the whirl of public life. You must have suffered from what has been said about you or about me in these circumstances: try and get used to that, whilst ever turning your thoughts to God, to justice, truth and the future. Nothing is so grand as being alone in such company as that.

CIII. On his Candidature for the French Academy

Sorèze, November 16, 1859

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I will try to let you know frankly my opinion with regard to the kind expressions used by M. ——, of which you tell me in your last letter.

You may be sure that I should like the honour of a seat in the French Academy, and that I am touched at the unsolicited kindness with which my candidature has been taken up by several of the most illustrious academicians. Their kindness, which followed me to my retreat, and which I have not sought in any way whatever, is perhaps the only public honour awarded to me during my life. I say *perhaps* out of regard for the choice made of me by the city of Marseilles to represent it in the last Constituent Assembly. With the exception of that election I remember nothing in my life of the nature of a public honour. The honour is quite compatible with my position as a religious. Bishops have sat in the French Academy; other ecclesiastics belonging to the regular clergy have found a place there; no one was surprised at it, because literary renown is of all things the least fettered by anything like rank or condition. The Roman academies are full of religious, and I know a Dominican holding a very high post at the Pontifical Court who is a member of the Arcadian Academy, and is called there Tityrus or Melibæus. He might, then, for even stronger and graver reasons, be a member of the French Academy.

So far so good. You will now ask me, perhaps, Why don't you come to Paris? Why don't you bring yourself forward as a candidate, since you seek the honour of belonging to the Academy and believe it consistent with the modesty of the habit you wear? Bossuet was not so nice or so sensitive. Quite true, my dear friend, but in the first place Bossuet lived at Court; he did not live in a school six hundred miles from Paris. That is one difference. He

was free, and you who have stayed at Sorèze know what little time I have to myself.

Then Bossuet, since he has been brought forward, lived in a religious age. The name and the cross he bore met with no hostility at the Academy; he might offer himself without any risk, carrying his genius in his hand. Can I do so, who have not his genius and live in another age? Can I knock at the door of the Academy with the certainty of not exposing to contumely the name and the cross I bear? Can I? What certainty have I of the majority or minority which awaits me? If I were exposing myself alone, I might make the sacrifice; but I carry with me the gods of Rome—*Dii indigetes*—and I carry them in an age which has as yet but a very questionable regard for them. Is not my honourable and respected seclusion here worth preserving from such a danger?

Then, as regards even literary honours, is it quite the thing for a religious to seek them? And, though that is not out of place at Rome, is it not a little risky at Paris? I leave it to your tact and friendship. Moreover, what does the Academy require? To be sure of my gratitude and acceptance? But it is quite sure of both. My word was given from the first day that I was told I was not altogether out of the question.

Whatever happens, my dear friend, I already consider myself honoured at being thought of by so many men eminent in the literature of our country and our age. If their votes do not raise me to the title of their colleague, I shall still bear in mind that they did not deem me unworthy of it.

CIV. On Detachment from Honours

Sorèze, December 7, 1859.

I GOT both your letters at the same time. You are quite right in thinking that no answer should be made to the article in question, and you were well advised in not sending it to me. It is better to know nothing of attacks which we mean to meet only by silence.

You tell me you are like a dead man: that is a very happy thought of yours. Death is an admirable shield against the world and self, provided it does not go too far, and is confined to that beautiful kind of death which is the absence of any human ambition, of whatever nature, little or great. I have always thought that in entire disinterestedness as well as in chastity lies the power, the honour and the salvation of the priest. How many priests fall through ambition? It is true that they are pure in body, but not in spirit; they are slaves to fortune, a cruel and degrading mistress.

By the bye, my dear friend, you seem to think that I wish to belong to the French Academy: that is a mistake. I had never even thought of it. I was approached on the matter, not only by my friends, such as M. de Montalembert and M. de Falloux, but by others, such as MM. Cousin, Villemain and Guizot. The question then was whether I ought to refuse or to let things take their course. Madam Swetchine, on her deathbed, thought it would be wrong to refuse, because such spontaneous advances made

to a religious by men of mark was an act of homage to religion.

Now ought we to refuse an act of homage tendered to God in the person of one of His ministers, who in no way sought it, and who can truthfully say he never even desired it? I have followed Madame Swetchine's advice, although the honour is not without its ties, and I do not like to sacrifice a jot of my entire independence.

I must tell you, my very dear friend, that I am at present finishing a little work upon St Magdalene. It will fill from 150 to 200 pages duodecimo, and the aim of it is to revive faith in and devotion to that great penitent, one of the patrons of our order, who has just summoned us back to watch over her tomb at St-Maximin, as well as over the famous grotto where she spent the last thirty years of her life. It will be published about the end of next February.

My dear friend, you must go for the great feast in May. You will come and pick me up at Sorèze, and we will go together to St-Maximin, then to the Ste-Baume, after having assisted at the translation of St Magdalene's head. That, I hope, is an engagement you cannot refuse.

I like the idea of the *circum-incession* of thought and feeling which you say exists between us. For Seneca said: "Idem velle atque idem nolle ea demum firma amicitia est." Alas! what a scarce thing that is, and how few souls have I seen remaining true to the programme of their youthful years! Don't you go and change: you would be the last plank of my wreck sinking beneath the waves. Good-bye. I embrace you, and love you "usque ad crucem"!

CV. The Monastery of San Esteban at Salamanca

Sorèze, April 3, 1860.

SIR,—I got, a few days ago, the letter you were kind enough to write to me, as well as the accompanying Spanish manuscript and pamphlet. I cannot say I have read the two little works, being ignorant of the Spanish language, which I never studied, because, although for the last seven years I have been close to the Pyrenees, I have never had occasion to cross them. But your kind and long letter, which I understood very well, has given me a very sufficient notion of the marvels and memories of our old monastery at San Esteban at Salamanca. Then I pictured to myself very clearly the face of good Fray Pedro Manobel, your cicerone, and was touched at the sentiments the good old man expressed towards me. Of all the great foundations of the Dominican Order there only remain those of Italy, and God alone knows how long our brethren will continue to dwell in those ancient buildings raised by their ancestors. All that was ancient is day by day dwindling out of sight as we advance. Everything is changing, everything is vanishing, but only to be renewed once more. Man cannot destroy any of the fundamental conditions of his existence; and religion, which is one of them, can in the future exist in no shape save that of Christianity.

Many thanks to you, Sir, for having thought of me in our old manor of Salamanca, and for having sent me so much valuable information about so noble a monument of our Order.

CVI. Duties towards Servants

Sorèze, April 23, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not know where to address this letter, for in yours you do not tell me whether you are going to stay at Toulouse or to return to R——. Be careful to put at the head of your letters both date and place. You know that I am a very precise methodical man, and your friendship for me will easily induce you to gratify me on that point.

The news you give me of your soul is not so very bad. I do not at all like to see you with companions whose conversation is not what it ought to be, and whom in your heart you do not like. Even when quite young and an unbeliever I never lived in such company; it would have inspired me with nothing but contempt. You say you will only go out walking with them, or to the theatre or restaurant: who will answer for your going no further? Then is it a mere trifle to listen to talk more or less scandalous, for one who knows Jesus Christ and wishes to serve Him? Ah! my poor dear friend, I am uneasy about you at the thought of your being with souls inferior to your own; and I would give a great deal to see you choose friends such as your own heart must want.

You have told me nothing about the way you spend your day—your rising, your going to bed, and the employment of your time; and yet these things nearly make up a man's life. In your next letter do not fail to supply the omission.

I congratulate you on having found for your

servant a young fellow who seems likely to become attached to you. Do not forget that a faithful affectionate servant is one of the greatest blessings God can send us, and an important source of happiness. But you will only get such a man by looking after his soul, that is, by teaching him to know and love Jesus Christ. For that you should teach him his catechism, say your night prayers with him every evening in your room, go to communion with him on the great festivals of the year; in short, act on the thought that he is of the same blood as yourself, and that he is even your superior if more virtuous than yourself. Such practices may seem strange to you, and yet they were those of our forefathers. In every country-house, indeed in every well-ordered home, the servants were taught Christian doctrine, they said their prayers with the family, they went to communion with them on the *bonnes fêtes*, according to the phrase of the time. Such were the customs of our ancestors, and hence they had devoted servants, who grew old in the family. Take an interest then, my dear friend, in your servant's soul, just as I do in your own. Try to train it, to raise and purify it: you yourself will be the gainer. Are not your relations with me a proof of what I say? What were you to me or I to you before God inspired me with the thought of saving your soul?

Your soul gradually expanded; it learnt to know Jesus Christ; it yielded; and now you have become a young fellow both lovable and loving. Now what we two have done you may yourself do with one inferior to you in birth and fortune, but your equal before God and the gospel. If you were a rake, you would not be

afraid of letting your servant share your vices, and of making use of him as a tool in gratifying your vilest passions: how then, being a Christian, can you be ashamed to humble yourself before him in the practice of virtue?

Do not forget, my dear friend, that confession and communion is the very foundation. Without these two supports your life will be wrecked.

Good-bye, my very dear friend; be kind, frank, loving and penitent. It is by humbling yourself by penance that you will be kept from the perils which you will encounter. I embrace you as my child, and assure you of the deep affection God has given me for you.

CVII. On Pantheism

Sorèze, May 2, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have just read your philosophical essay. I liked your work very much; it is solid, and written in a way to hold the imagination, a very great merit in the high regions of metaphysics and religion. I will only say a word about pantheism. You seem to me to think it might be possible to plunge into a system so absurd from a sort of yearning after the infinite. For my part, nothing ever seems to me to deny both the infinite and the finite so much as pantheism does; it is the shipwreck of both in the vague notion of the indefinite, which is nothing else than the possibility of the finite ever extending in the limitless immensity of the infinite. The indefinite, apart from the two terms finite and infinite, is the lowest degree of unmeaningness and absurdity. That is why

pantheism revolts me by its direct and entire negation of common sense. I prefer downright materialism. There we have nothing but matter, which exists because it does, and there's an end of it. I should have been better pleased, then, if you had not done pantheism the honour of believing that it can seduce the mind by a certain charm. To my mind it is nothing but huge emptiness.

Did I not tell you of the ugly turn the influenza was nearly taking with me? That is strange. I was sure that, in my last letter but one, I had enlisted your sympathy for that poor machine, my body, which, however, is daily getting stronger, and is getting ready for that beautiful festival at St-Maximin, from which you will have the courage to absent yourself. I feel, my dear friend, that you would have nursed me admirably, and that your presence would have been a health-restoring balm to me. But that, of course, would not make it worth your while to come.

I must wait for you till the great occasion when they will have to close my eyes. I nurse the hope that God will give me some presentiment of it, and that I shall be able to have you with me in that terrible passage, in which no one is sure of keeping his peace of mind. I often think of it, although as yet I have no definite sign of the end.

CVIII. Bad Companions

Sorèze, May 8, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter brought me two bits of good news. The first is that you had broken away from some of your former companions, whose conversation was morally unfit. I cannot tell you how I congratulate you on your resolution; for, believe me, our whole life depends upon the persons with whom we live on terms of familiarity. Familiarity accustoms us to things as well as to persons, and what at first seems to us mean and hateful, ends by creeping into our own habits. The ear loses its delicacy, the heart its modesty, the mind its clearness; in the end we yield to what once seemed to repel us; and from words we pass to actions, which complete our corruption. That is the history of the spread of evil on earth. So I am delighted at your having broken away from those young fellows, and that you have found others more worthy of you. You may be sure that a very little may afford a pleasant distraction to your loneliness. If one real friend is enough, a few companions are enough also. Besides, good company leads to good company, and although there is less of it than of bad, nevertheless, thank God, it too has a tendency to increase.

Thank you for your portrait. It will remind me of the time of your early youth, and will not grow old like ourselves.

Good-bye. I expect to see you soon.

CIX. Practices of Christian Life—To a Pupil of Soreze

Sorèze, June 15, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your last letter gave me great pleasure; it showed me that you have not become indifferent to your school and to your masters, and also that you are keeping to your good principles in the midst of the world. You have already been able to see the difficulties, sadness and sorrow in which the world abounds, and I am glad of it for your sake, since you will have for it the feelings with which it ought to inspire you.

You know what I told you to keep you *immaculatum ab hoc sæculo;* a very simple little rule, but one to which you will be invariably faithful. Pray regularly morning and night, read a short passage from the Gospel, go every month to confession and communion, have some little practice of penance to keep you humble and chaste, and to preserve you from the spirit of the world. That little will be enough to support you, to lift you higher than a merely sensuous life, to bind you to God, to strengthen and comfort you.

CX. On Controversy

Sorèze, June 19, 1860.

SIR,—I thank you for having called my attention to the "Examen des Dogmes du Christianisme." I had heard it spoken of, but did

not think of reading it, that kind of work being usually very shallow, although it always does harm. Then, again, I have taken very little part in controversy, being convinced that the direct exposition of Christianity destroys in anticipation all the objections brought against it. Christianity is like an ancient building, with deep and solid foundations, and controversy is like the sand which the wind drives against its imperishable walls.

Still I do not say that it is useless to answer attacks, and I should be glad if no hostile book appeared without getting a good stroke from the sword of truth. God has not left me enough liberty to wield such an avenging blade. I have only written at intervals amid a multitude of occupations; and old age, instead of bringing me retirement and rest, has but increased the weight of my many difficult duties. My happiness would be to spend my declining days quietly in writing for God, for Jesus Christ and for the Church. But necessity commands me as it does all men, and the inability, before which I bow, is doubtless more pleasing to God than would be the fulfilment of my inmost wishes.

I am much touched, Sir, by the sentiments of regard which you express for me, and beg you to accept mine, and to remember me before the Justice and Goodness which enlighten us both.

CXI. The War of the Senses—"Opportunity"

Sorèze, June 25, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—What you tell me about your soul gives me great fears for the future. What strikes me first of all is that you say nothing about love: it is not love, not a sincere and deep attachment of the heart, even though misplaced, which seems to captivate you, but simply the attraction of the senses. Your heart seems dumb, whilst your imagination is running after mere sensual dreams. That is a state which I do not like. You think that "if an opportunity occurred," you would not resist. What a word to choose! Opportunity—that is to say, a chance meeting with the means at hand—something with which the heart has nothing to do! Fortunately, my dear friend, a virtuous man never finds such opportunities. You must either of your own will seek out places of infamy; or seduce a wife from her husband and children by premeditated treachery; or gain the affections of a young and innocent girl, protected in the bosom of her family, to which honourable confidence has given you an entrance; or else seek out in the lower ranks of the working classes some poor creature who cannot resist your wealth, your youth, your good looks, your deceitful promises, and make her for a time the victim of pleasures from which she will one day reap nothing but desertion, contempt and ruin of body and soul. Such are, my dear friend, the only alternatives left by nature and society to the passions you foster.

In all this there is nothing but sin—not "opportunity." If you are to have an opportunity, you yourself will make it: it will not come and disturb your sleep, or drag you from your room when you are alone. That gives me a little comfort.

I see, too, you talk of reason which holds you back. Reason is not to be despised, but it is weak against the onslaught of the senses supported by the imagination. Scripture says: "Nemo potest esse continens, nisi Deus det." Now you do not feel the love of God, even though you grant that if you loved Him the mystery of chastity would be wrought in you. What is to become of you? I do not know. I hope and I fear. I have hopes, because you like and seek out good companions, and have broken with your loose companions; because you are or seem to be determined to go regularly to confession and communion; because you have sentiments of virtue and piety; lastly, because I love you, and you seem determined always to reveal your heart to me. I have fears, because you do not love God, because you are a stranger to inward and outward mortification, because your fortune opens to you that front-door of the passions, idleness; and lastly, because your heart is weaker than your senses. Oh! if by clasping you to mine, I could reveal to you the deep joys of continency, and tell you what a soul is when mistress of the body! If you could experience what I do, and look upon your body as a furnace of love and sacrifice for God! But all that is hidden from you. You have as yet only reached the threshold of virtue, and you will perhaps not reach the sanctuary without having first pro-

faned the temple! That does not keep me from loving you; and may be my fear makes me love you as much as my hopes for you. God loves man: how can man but love his fellow-man?

God bless you. I embrace you, and leave you—and yet I do not leave you.

CXII. On the Perils of Youth

Sorèze, July 26, 1860.

My dear Friend,—On my return from taking the waters at Rennes, I got your letter of July 8, and I have just got that of the 24th. My silence was due to the backward state of my correspondence, but I had you in my mind, and was daily looking out for a moment to write to you. Your last letter frightens me. It seems to me that you are on the eve of a fall: it would be a terrible thing for you; for, if once you fell, it would be very hard for you to recover. When vice which has been restrained breaks out, it is like a torrent which has burst its dam and carries everything before it. You have received much; Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to you in a special way. Ah, if you could but love Him! If you could only love His body, which was torn and bruised for you! But that adorable body appeals but faintly to you: you hardly give it a passing glance, and the eye of your heart immediately turns away to follow the seductions of the flesh. I am sure you have been a long time away from confession and communion; and yet you promised me to go every month.

What can you expect to become in a life of

unceasing pleasure, in no wise balanced by the serious practices of religion? Come and see me soon. You know that our speech-day is Monday, August 6, and the distribution of prizes will take place the day after. A few days later I shall leave for Burgundy; I shall make a few visits on the way, and be back here about the middle of September. So the only opportunity we shall have of seeing each other will be at the distribution of prizes or the few days following. You ought never to let more than a month go by without coming to see me. You can do this very easily, since your town is very near Toulouse, where you are going to study law. For, all things considered, you had better study there. Without frequent intercourse between us you will fall, my dear friend, and once the dam has burst, God only knows what will become of you. I am your ship, your haven; don't forget that. So I shall expect you at the beginning of August.

CXIII. On Vocation to the Religious Life

Sorèze, July 31, 1860.

. . . . The great matter for you is to find out whether you have a real vocation, whether you understand the sacrifice of your whole being to the cause of God, of Jesus Christ and of His Church. It did, indeed, seem to me that you had the germs of it, with the exception of a rather wayward and somewhat unmanageable character. That is, in my opinion, the great obstacle in your way. Can you be obedient? Can you defer to the authority of superiors? Will you not cling to your own ideas and will?

To reform your character in this respect will certainly try you, but every man who gives himself to God must reform something. You must then examine yourself, and see whether you feel called to leave the world in order to devote yourself to the education and instruction of youth. If you do come, I shall be very glad, as I have always esteemed and trusted you, and am persuaded that God will return you a hundredfold what you give Him.

CXIV. A Word about Italy

Flavigny, September 4, 1860.

I HAVE been at Flavigny for the last three days, and am well pleased with my visit as well as with the results of the congregation we held. I found all hearts at peace, sincere confidence in me, and signs of affection which I could not mistake. I am authorized to choose a provincial vicar, and to entrust to him the heavy burden of administration. I shall be behind my vicar for the more serious business, and shall represent the province before the public. It will considerably lighten my work, and will give me more rest, and allow me to take up pursuits more in harmony with my tastes, as well as with the interests of religion.

My dear friend, I am not thoroughly undeceived, for I was never thoroughly deceived. What we are witnessing now was bound to have happened, once Italy was left to herself; and although the leaders in that country seem to me to look badly after the cause of her nationality and her liberty, yet I am convinced that the

final result will be the federation of Italy, fresh safety secured to the temporal power of the Pope, and the overthrow of tyrants and demagogues. That is my strong belief, because God is behind men, and is stronger than they.

CXV. The same Subject

Sorèze, October 1, 1860.

WHAT is going forward in Italy will become a supreme struggle between the demagogues and the constitutional party. The plans of either party are so confused that it is impossible to foresee the immediate issue of events. But I still think that Italy will get rid of Austria, that she will be federated, and that the Pope will recover a sufficient portion of his States, and that the future will be better than the past, both from a temporal and a spiritual point of view.

The designs of men cannot prevail against the force of events and the will of God.

CXVI. A Soul hesitating between God and Evil—Warnings, Menaces, Entreaties

Sorèze, October 4, 1860.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am very sorry I shall not see you before the end of October. Your visit would have given me real pleasure, and have afforded me an opportunity of talking to you about your soul and its needs. The sense of weariness, depression and disgust which you experience are quite natural in your state of mind

and body. You have not to work for a living, and thus you are deprived of the ambition and necessity which urge most men. All your time is your own, with unvarying pleasures which cannot fill up for ever the twenty-four hours of the day. On the other hand, you have not got vice for a distraction. Not that it would be a remedy for you: on the contrary, you would experience in it a poignant bitterness which would make you disgusted with yourself.

Vice is so infamous in its pleasures, and at the same time so short-lived a resource, that it beguiles a few moments only at the price of most crushing remorse. But it would at least, from time to time, afford you distraction such as that which drunkenness gives to those who endeavour to drown their sorrows in it. So shameful and dearly-purchased a distraction you cannot have. God has revealed Himself to you too clearly to allow you to abandon yourself for any length of time to the frenzy of your imagination and your senses. You would be so mean in your own eyes, so branded, so tortured with remorse that the experience would seem to you harder than anything else. God loves you, and He has taken you for His own; He will not let you go. He will punish your faults by chastisement compared to which the most cruel physical punishment would seem trifling. So that door is closed to you. You may dream of vile pleasures, but you will never give yourself up to them without frightful remorse.

Still, though vice is painful and almost impossible to you, you have not the joy and peace of virtue. You are lukewarm and weak in God's service. Prayer, communion, penance, pious reading, all that sustains and enraptures the

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soul, is almost unknown to you. In these things you have no regular habits; you feed upon fleeting impressions, going to confession and communion now and then, to Mass on Sundays, keeping the abstinence days of the Church, but not loving Jesus Christ tenderly as your best Friend, ready at every instant to press Him to your heart, to offer Him your life, to suffer for Him in your body every kind of shame and pain, to be scourged and crucified for His sake, even as He was for yours. The Crucified brings no message to your soul, which should outweigh its shameful desires. What then is left for you? Mere void. You are wandering about a dark and chilly tomb, haunted by frightful visions, ready to grasp at them as you would at immortal realities. But so soon as you seek to touch them, Jesus Christ checks you; He recalls you to Himself; He tells you that He loves you and died for you: if you only knew the happiness of loving Him!

My poor friend, such is your condition. It will only cease when you give yourself up to God. For that end it is not necessary to become a priest or a monk. No; a man may love God tenderly and fervently in any state of life. But you must *will* it, and for that purpose must lay down an inviolable rule for your relations with Him. Daily prayer, morning and night, monthly confession and communion, practices of penance and humility, which by humbling you, by chastening your mind and senses, will also increase your love. For love springs from sacrifice, and especially from the sacrifice of pride. You are vain, my dear friend. You like outward show; you like your horse and your groom; you wish

to be considered a fine young fellow and to be looked at; you are proud of your noble rank; in short, you are a little animal, compounded of many different kinds of pride, which are so natural to you that perhaps you do not even notice them. Therefore no one has more need than you of voluntary and involuntary humiliation.

See how I talk to you. Ah! it is because of my love for you, and because I would gladly suffer much to give you the love of God. You are naturally cold; and yet there are good motives within your heart. Your friendship for me is one of them; but you must make use of it in the supernatural order, and give me a full account of all that goes on within you. What a time since you have been to confession to me! Already you have begun to find the disclosure difficult—even to me, your friend! Come and see me then as soon as possible, and keep me well informed of the state of your soul. I no longer know anything of what you do for God or of the evil you do either.

God bless you, my very dear child; I embrace and love you.

CXVII. On Perseverance in Christian Ways

Sorèze, November 30, 1860.

My dear Friend,—It was with very great interest that I got your letter, and I was greatly consoled to find that you are bravely holding to the principles and sentiments in which you were brought up. It is the best reward I can have for the affection I showed you. You are now able to compare the soul that is lifted up by

Christianity above its low inclinations with the soul sunk in the grovelling instincts of the body.

Those poor young fellows—victims of their senses—are no longer even ashamed; they have not even strength enough to throw a veil over the riot of their imagination. They must uncover their very shame, and have forgotten how to blush. You, my dear friend, are profiting by the strength you gained with us at Sorèze; it supports you, ennobles you, consoles you in your own conscience, and, whether you look back on the past or forward to the future, repays you a hundredfold what it costs you.

You have some good companions at Paris. I trust that they too will remain faithful to their traditions, and that you will find in their company both help and pleasure. They are very distinguished young men. I advise you to see them as often as possible. Noble company is one of the first and purest pleasures of man, even when the atmosphere which it breathes does not directly foster virtue.

I also strongly urge you not to lay aside your old religious practices—not one of them is useless. Willed and inspired by God for the wants of our present life in the spiritual and moral order, they are as necessary for the health of the soul as sunlight, food, exercise and rest are for the health of the body.

Choose a director in whom you have confidence; see him from time to time; communicate, if not once a month, at least on every great festival; think more and more of God, of Jesus Christ, of His Church; and your life as a Christian will ever rise stronger and stronger on foundations which nothing shall shake.

CXVIII. A New Discovery

Sorèze, December 24, 1860.

YOUR letter of December 5 quite startled me. I thought that for six years past I had been giving you undoubted proofs of friendship; and now you suddenly begin to see that it might perhaps be taken seriously, just as though you were a Columbus discovering a new continent! However that may be, I am very glad that you should moor your little skiff under the lee of my poor heart; it is getting very old, but may perhaps yet give shelter to a craft manned by so dear a skipper as yourself.

Here we are at Christmas—this evening, to-night, and to-morrow. I must leave you to go and prepare my young folk.

A thousand good wishes for Christmas and the New Year! I embrace you and love you. If that is not enough, you yourself must find out what more can be done!

CXIX. Christianity and Democracy

Sorèze, February 23, 1861.

SIR,—In my speech at my reception into the French Academy, on which you are kind enough to congratulate me, I did not mean to set up American democracy as the ideal type of human society, but to show by a clear comparison the grave difference between the *spirit* which founded the United States of America, and that which

since 1798 has been animating most liberals and democrats in Europe.

Even though the United States are destined to exist for a long period, it does not therefore follow that they are to be set up as the invariable and universal type of all free societies. In this, as in other things, variety is a law of the world, and surely no two things were less like each other than England and France from 1814 to 1848, although both were enjoying a constitutional monarchy. In this matter it is the *spirit* which counts; it is the anti-religious, levelling, state-centralizing spirit which has rendered abortive the great revolution of 1789, and has always prevented it from producing the results we had a right to expect from it.

So long as this spirit exists, liberalism will be overcome either by a tyrannical democracy or by unbridled autocracy, and that is why the union of liberty and Christianity is the only salvation possible in the future. Christianity alone can give liberty its true character, and liberty alone can give Christianity the means of influence of which it has need. M. de Tocqueville understood this, and that is the great feature of his life. Christianity made him an out-and-out liberal—pure, disinterested, superior to the party divisions of his time; and God willed that in spite of such a position of superiority he should win the unanimous homage of France, of Europe and of America. His opinions, like his memory, should be as a lodestar to all those who think as you, Sir, and in the eulogy which I passed upon him on a memorable occasion, I had no other intention than to throw into relief the figure of one who has clearly been set us as a model.

Chateaubriand, O'Connell, Frederic Ozanam, Tocqueville—such, in the generation which is dying out, are our fathers and our leaders. I trust the race will live, and my consolation is to think that I follow, although at a great distance, in their footsteps.

CXX. Is there a True Religion?

(The three Letters which follow, which are all related in their subject-matter, are added from the later French editions.)

Issy, May 27, 1825.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—We are wont to speak to one another without any reserve on anything that is of interest to us; and to-day I am going to take advantage of that sweet privilege to tell you that I should much like to hear what your thoughts are with regard to the greatest subject of all human speculation. When I left you, you hardly had any religious belief at all; but at that time we had neither of us thought much on those important questions which sooner or later draw to themselves the attention of those who are able to understand and to discuss them. It is only the fool who can suffer himself to be carried down the stream of life without once asking himself whither it flows; without wondering at the meaning of his own actions; without that spirit of enquiry which impels even the savage on learning of a missionary's arrival in his neighbourhood to hasten to him and ask: "They tell us that you know where the great Spirit lives; take me to the great Spirit!" No doubt, my dear friend, you have often thought of the unseen Spirit which made everything that we

see, and which has given even to us a little place in the great course of ages; you have often enquired into the purpose of His works and of your own existence. You are not like those who drink, eat, sleep, earn so many thousand dollars a year, and call that life. Like all noble souls you understand how vain are things merely human. You lift up your eyes to the countless worlds which surround us and teach us how little we are in the eyes of Him who created such limitless space as a finite image of Himself; you look back on the ages past, and the silence of the uncounted generations which were once living on earth disgusts you with the stir which our own generation thinks that it is making in the world; you look into your own heart and find there a craving which nothing can satisfy save truth. Is not that the condition of your soul?

But where may we find truth? Alas! Men have long been following it like a will-o'-the-wisp, which ever seems to escape them; the greatest minds in every age have devoted themselves—almost in vain—to its glorious pursuit; and they have barely left us for our undisputed inheritance the existence of God, the natural law and the immortality of the soul. Philosophy is an everlasting subject for discussion, and its influence over our morals is hardly anything at all—you know that as well as I.

But, my dear friend, we still have one resource, religion. We are told that there exists a religion, that is to say, a set of truths which God has revealed to men, which comprises their entire duty and contains the secret of their origin and of their destiny.

We are told that that religion is contained in

its entirety in a book, which is itself the history of the most ancient people in the world, and that that people exists to this day and bears testimony to the book. We have been told so for eighteen centuries; the greatest men have lived and died in that belief. Besides, there never was a religion more touching, more sublime, more worthy of God; and it is agreed by all that if there is a true religion it is undoubtedly that one.

So that the search after truth is now reduced to these two points: Is an outward and divine revelation possible? Is the Christian revelation true?

The former of these questions embraces all the general difficulties raised against revelation itself, treated *a priori*, that is to say, apart from such or such a fact; the latter includes everything that can be urged against the revelation made on earth by Christ the Son of God. If it is true that God cannot reveal to mankind things which He has hidden from human reason; if it is true that Christianity is a tissue of sublime imposture, we need seek no more; we can only sit and hide our face in our hands, and weep over man, who has been cast here below by some unknown power with so uncertain a destiny.

No, my dear friend. Such is not our lot. You will never reach so harrowing a conclusion if you love truth, if you seek it fervently and in good faith, if you are resolved to obey whatever it shall command when you have found it. For those three conditions are wholly necessary if one is to succeed in an enterprise from which every issue hangs; and nothing is so rare as to find all three united: one man does not care about truth; another does not sincerely seek it;

a third has not made up his mind to put it into practice. Hearken to the words of one who knew all things: "And this is the judgement: because the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."*

Oh, my dear friend, you are still young, as I am. You still have the single-mindedness of youth, you are not oppressed by the weight of fifty years of sin and error, you are worthy to love and know truth. Are you sure that Christianity is false? If you think you are sure, ask yourself the motives for your conviction, the grounds on which you rely; and you will see that your mind will suggest to you no precise reason, nothing positive and logical, nothing which can acquit your conscience of the reproach of being rash. If you are not sure it is false, you will see clearly that it is your duty to study it, not merely in the writings of her enemies but in those of her defenders too.

We will speak of this matter again—as often as you like. How happy are friends who have the same religion! Good-bye!

CXXI. The Search after Truth

Paris, August 14, 1827.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I remember often having heard you say that you quite understood how important it was to study religion seriously; but that, owing to the necessity of working for your

* John iii, 19, 20.

living, you must wait for a happier time, when you could have greater freedom. Providence has just brought you such a time, and at twenty-five, with little trouble on your own part, I find you freed from the bitter anxiety which young men often have to bear from the uncertainty of their lot. So you must not be surprised if I write to remind you, if not of your promise, at least of your old wish.

From a merely human standpoint, my dear fellow, it matters little to me whether you are a Christian or a sceptic; it will make no difference to me here on earth. Our friendship does not depend on any religious profession; it began in the dreary waste of unbelief, when we both looked up to heaven from the same standpoint. Its birth formed between us bonds of sympathy which shall never wear away. So that if, in the matter of religious belief, wilful error were not to lead to any further consequences, I would not take much trouble to involve you in an enquiry which would have no other end save the perfecting of your mind. If, on the other hand, there is a true religion, that is to say, one founded by God, it is plain that they who wilfully reject it without being able to give a reason for their rejection, shall be held accountable for their contempt. "Are we also blind?" the Pharisees asked Jesus, who reproved them for their unbelief. And Jesus said to them: "If you were blind, you would not have sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Your sin remaineth."* So that if any one shuts his eyes when he might see, his sin remaineth. If in the world there is a true religion—which at the very least is quite possible—

* John ix, 40, 41.

only two answers will excuse in God's sight: "I saw"; "I could not see." Any one who cannot confidently make answer in one of these two ways, is clearly walking blindfold over a precipice, unless indeed he is sure that religion is impossible.

And how can he be sure? It would be a poor defence to say: "Lord, I did not enquire into religion, because I was convinced that none was worthy of Thee." The least concession that is due to the many that believe religion to be true, is to acknowledge that it may possibly be true; for otherwise they would believe in what was necessarily false and could not by any possibility be true. And is that credible?

At the Last Day, then, there will remain only two replies that will avail: "I saw"; "I could not see." Hitherto you cannot make the former of these two answers; but could you even make the latter? Could you make it in a few years time? And if God were to put in one scale the intellect, the time and the leisure He has given you, what could you bring to weigh against it?

But, you urge, ought religion to be studied in such a way? Is it merely a matter for one's books or one's study? I do not see that it can be derogatory in God if He wishes every man to come to the knowledge of truth by the means adapted to the developement of his moral powers; so that the tree of life should stand at a different height for different men, and be nearer to him who has the shorter arm by which to grasp it. Such a plan would be worthy of the divine Bounty and also of His Justice. What does it matter to God, what does it matter to us, whether the ages advance to His embraces

by one road or by another? Order reigns whenever there is agreement between the means and the end, however different the means may be. Nevertheless I grant that the close study of books was not part of the primitive disposition of Providence, and that the means God chose was the authority of a general and undisputed tradition. But remember that there is perhaps nothing that exists to-day which exists quite in the way it ought. God, for instance, created man to live in society, and that is why He made the individual weak but society all-powerful. A man cuts adrift from his fellows, and goes to seek the pleasures of life in the forests of another continent. Would he have a right in old age to accuse his Creator of the ailments from which he suffered and for which he could find no remedy in his lonely wilds? That is what unbelievers do. They have destroyed the usual means of Providence for the instruction of the people; they have set up pulpit against pulpit; they have gathered clouds over the sun's face; and their children complain to God that they can no longer see Him. Every work to which man has set his hand is no longer the work of God alone; the moral world is like Corinthian bronze, in which gold and silver were alloyed by fire with base metals. It is then unjust and a mistake to try and make God answerable for everything that we find in religion. At the Last Day we shall understand God's plans, and we shall magnify God's Justice by the shame we shall feel for having set in place of His will and His purposes our own miserable inventions.

Had you been born three centuries ago with the same mind and in the same position of life,

you would have been a Christian, an enlightened Christian. You are not so to-day, because for three centuries men have been working for your unbelief. Is that God's fault? You will say that at any rate it is not yours. Not if you have taken advantage of what grace God has given you; not if you make use of the means God has left you to repair the fault of your forefathers.

There is a means which you must add to study; for mere study seldom makes a convert, as La Harpe confessed in a sermon on the Psalms, in which he described the new impression made upon him by reading the Scriptures. He shows how different is the impression they make when they are studied merely as literature and out of curiosity, from that made when they are read with a hearty desire to know the truth. One only finds what one desires to find, since one only seeks what one desires to find. Fénelon and Voltaire were both men of great intellectual strength: the former wept and admired when he read Scripture; the latter only found in it matter for scoffing. I tell you with Christian frankness that only prayer can prepare the heart for faith. And why should you be ashamed to implore Him whom you acknowledge as Almighty Power and infinite Light? I have sometimes noticed in you a wish to worship God in your own way: why not say to Him: "Lord, my life has been set in an age when truth has become uncertain from the struggles which have impaired it. Grave questions are being discussed around me, without my knowing on which side is falsehood. I can see nothing but darkness, dissension and doubt.

Tell me by Thine inspirations what I must do, and give me the desire to know Thee."

My dear friend, he who prays and seeks shall not perish. When God foresaw all that would be done against His Christ, and the cloud of darkness which wickedness would raise up between Him and man, He left him prayer for a safeguard. Salvation is possible so long as there is prayer upon earth; and he who does not pray shall have no excuse before God's judgement seat; for every man knows God, and whoever knows Him and does not pray to Him is illogical and unjust. Believe me, it is the experience of every age: conversions do not take place without prayer, and that very fact proves the divinity of religion.

Truth is a matter for silence and reflection. Mere argument avails nothing. Good-bye.

CXXII. Books to read about the Catholic Church

Paris, April 26, 1834.

SIR,—I am much touched by the confidence you are so kind as to show towards me; and I hasten to send you a list of works which I think most suitable for giving a true acquaintance with the Catholic religion. The order in which I place them is purely arbitrary: you can without any impropriety begin where you like, except as regards the Bible, which you would do well to read constantly.*

* In the original all the following works, including those by English writers, are quoted by the titles of the French editions. Lacordaire knew but little English.—EDITOR.

THE BIBLE.
M. DE MAISTRE. Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg; Du Pape; Lettres sur l'Inquisition Espagnole; Considérations sur la France.
M. DE BONALD. Recherches Philosophiques; Mélanges de Littérature et de Philosophie.
M. DE LA MENNAIS. Vol. I of the Essai sur l'Indifférence.
M. RUBICHON. De l'Influence du Clergé dans les Sociétés Modernes.
WILLIAM COBBETT. History of the Protestant Religion.
BULLET. Histoire du Christianisme par les seuls Auteurs Juifs et Païens.
BERGIER. Traité de la Religion.
GUÉNÉE. Lettres de quelques Juifs à Voltaire.
EULER. Essai de Défense touchant la Révélation Divine.
LEIBNITZ. Essai de Theodicée.
MALEBRANCHE. Recherche de la Vérité; Entretiens sur la Métaphysique.
DESCARTES. Méditations.
PASCAL. Pensées.
BOSSUET. Histoire Universelle; Histoire des Variations; Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique sur les Matiéres de Controverse.
ST AUGUSTINE. Confessions.
ST JEROME. Letters.
JOSEPHUS. War of the Jews and Romans.
PLATO. Complete Works.
CICERO. Philosophical Works.
ADDISON. Evidences of the Christian Religion.
LELAND. The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation.
LYTTELTON. Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St Paul.
STARCK. Entretiens sur la Ré-union des Differentes Communions Chrétiennes.
ARNAUD D'ANDILLY. Vie des Pères du Désert.
MILTON. Paradise Lost.

The books in this list, Sir, are nearly all of high merit. If you read them with attention, perseverance and a desire to know and embrace the truth, I am confident that God will bless your enquiry. As for myself, I should be most happy to have served you as a finger-post.

CXXIII. God and the Existence of Evil *

Aisy-le-Duc, October 18, 1838.

THANKS, my dear friend, for your two kind letters of September 23 and October 11. I am sorry to see from the second of them that you are giving way to low spirits. Everything that you say about God's bounty is unjust. You keep thinking that it was God who made the world as it is, and I must remind you that it is by no means so. Evil is the child of man, because man set himself before God. If God has given him free-will, it is because free-will is essential to the act of love, and the act of love is supreme bliss. Love, when not free, is sweet to him who loves it, but not to him who is loved; for the act of love, to be reciprocal, must include two movements—the movement of embrace and that of devotion. Necessity does not preclude the movement of embrace, but it annihilates the movement of devotion; and without that there is no love. So that freedom is necessary to love, that is to say, to happiness. It is true that one day we shall love God without undergoing that painful vacillation from which we suffer on earth;

* Added to the 11th French edition.

but heavenly love, with its infinite embrace, will only be a continuation of that love which we first freely gave while on earth. That is how Jesus Christ, who was only sacrificed once, is yet a priest for ever and a victim for ever, since the act of love which He is ever fulfilling in heaven is but the continuation of that which He entertained in His Heart while on the cross.

Man is, therefore, free to love by choice; he has made a bad choice, and evil has been the fruit of his choosing falsely. But, by a mystery which is divine indeed, the evil that has sprung from man's base choice and from his indifference to God, by becoming an occasion for sacrifice and repentance, has also become an inexhaustible fountain of love. And, therefore, God has said: "Ego Dominus creans mala," "I am the Lord who createth evil"; and in that sense affliction is the greatest work of God's goodness.

You say that religion does not comfort you. Religion never promised to comfort you; on the other hand it tells you, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." One day they shall be comforted, but not here below. Earthly comfort is merely the foretaste of future comfort. Think what the world really is—a place of trial and penance, a prison. Do you wonder that your prison-cell should be ill-lighted, your jailers cruel, your food bad, your bed narrow and hard? The world, in its folly, revolts beneath the punishment which its own fault has brought upon it; it tries to adorn its prison-walls, or else dashes its head against them, ever dropping from the height of illusion to the depths of despair. The Christian knows that he is in a place of penance, as he deserves;

he smarts beneath the hand that chastises him, but receives it with love. The blow is not less heavy, but the spirit with which he receives it is wholly different; and that spirit gives him, even in his pain, a joy which cannot be explained to one who has not felt it. That is why the saints are not satisfied with the common penance which is the lot of all, whether they like it or no, but add thereto voluntary penances, which the world despises and looks upon as folly, since it does not understand that punishment which is accepted by the will becomes sacrifice; that sacrifice is devotion; that devotion is part of love, and that love is happiness.

So, my dear Hercules, you are but a poor reasoner, and ought to be put on bread and water to teach you not to be low-spirited, and to think better. But I forgive you since you are fond of me.

I am in a great hurry to see you again. Another fortnight yet! That is a long time. Write to me at Aisy-le-Duc (Côte-d'Or). A thousand kind messages to everyone at Boulogne. I embrace you tenderly.

The Childhood, Youth and Conversion of Lacordaire

A Fragment from his Unpublished Memoirs

My personal recollections begin to take clear shape at about the age of seven. Two events impressed that period deep in my memory. At about that time my mother sent me to a small school to begin my classical studies, and she also took me to the curé of her parish to make my first confession. I crossed the sanctuary, and found him alone in a fine large sacristy—a venerable old man, kind and gentle. It was the first time I had ever approached a priest. Hitherto I had only seen him at the altar, surrounded with pomp and incense-smoke. M. l'Abbé Deschamps—for that was his name—sat down on a bench and made me kneel beside him. I do not know what I told him or what he said to me; but the memory of my soul's first interview with the representative of God made a pure and deep impression upon me. I never went back to the sacristy of St-Michel at Dijon, I never breathed its atmosphere, without recalling my first confession made with all the simplicity of childhood at the feet of that fine old man. The whole church of St Michel indeed had a share in my devotion, and I have never visited it since without feelings of tenderness such as no other church has been able to inspire within me. My mother, St-Michel and my new-born religious faith stand out in my soul as the earliest,

the most touching, the most lasting of its memories.

At ten my mother got for me a scholarship at the lycée of Dijon. I first went there three months before the end of the school year. Then for the first time sorrow laid its grip upon me, and, while making itself known to me, made me turn to God more lovingly, more seriously and more resolutely. From the very first day my schoolfellows made a plaything or a victim of me. I could not move a step without their brutality devising some kind of torture for me. For many weeks I was even deprived by violence of every kind of nourishment except my broth and bread. To escape from such bullying I used, during recreation, to make for the study-room, and there would lie under a bench, hidden from the eyes of my masters and schoolfellows. There, left without any protection, in my utter loneliness, I wept tears of devotion in the presence of God, offering up to Him my early troubles in sacrifice, and lovingly embracing the cross of His Son.

I had been brought up by a Christian mother, a brave and valiant woman, and so religion had passed into my soul like sweet and purest milk. Suffering now transformed the precious stream into the strong blood of a young male, adapting it to my being and changing me from a mere child into a kind of martyr. My sorrows ceased at vacation-time, and, when I went back to school, either my schoolfellows were tired of persecuting me, or perhaps I won a reprieve from them by being less innocent and less simple.

At that time also there came to the lycée a

young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, who had just left the École Normale to take charge of an elementary class. Although not one of his pupils, he came across me and showed me affection. He occupied two rooms shut off in a corner of the school-building. I was allowed to go and work under his eye during part of my study-time. There for three years he gave gratuitously much care and attention to my literary studies. Though I was only in the sixth class, he made me read much, and even learn by heart from end to end the tragedies of Racine and Voltaire, which he patiently made me recite. He loved literature, and tried to inspire me with a taste for it. He was upright and honourable, and sought to make me gentle, chaste, frank and generous, and to tame a somewhat rebellious nature. He was a stranger to religion. He never spoke of it, and I was equally silent with regard to it. Had that precious gift not been wanting in him, he would have been the preserver of my soul as he was in fact the good genius of my mind; but God, who sent him to me to be my second father and my true master, was willing in His Providence that I should fall into the darkness of unbelief, so that later on I might the better realize the dazzling splendour of revealed light. So M. Delahaye, my dear master, let me follow the descending path which led my school fellows far from all religious faith; but he kept me on the lofty heights of literature and honour, on which he had set his own life. The events of 1815 took him from me all too soon. He was made a magistrate. I have always associated his memory with the happy experiences of my life.

I had made my first communion in 1814,

when I was twelve years old. It was my last religious consolation, the last ray of sunlight which passed from my mother's soul into my own. Soon darkness gathered about me; the chill of night surrounded me, and my conscience received from God no further sign of life.

I was only a moderate pupil, and my early studies met with no great success. My mind had become relaxed at the same time as my morals, and I followed that downward path which is the punishment of unbelief and the overthrow of reason. But suddenly in Rhetoric the literary seed which M. Delahaye had sown in my mind began to shoot forth, and honours without number served at the end of the year to arouse my pride rather than to reward my work. A short course of Philosophy, wanting in both depth and breadth, brought my classical studies to an end. I left college at seventeen, with faith destroyed and my moral character threatened, but honourable, frank, keen, sensitive of my reputation, with a love for letters and art, and holding before me as the torch which should guide my life the human ideal of glory.

The result was natural enough. Our faith received no support from an education in which the divine Word was only delivered to us darkly, fitfully and unattractively, whilst day by day we lived in the writings and examples of the great men of old. The ancient world was set before us under its sublime aspect and inspired us with its virtues; the newer world created by the Gospel remained almost unknown to us. We heard nothing of its great men, of its saints, of its civilization, of the advance of mankind

under the sign of the Cross. Even the history of our own country was hardly touched upon, so that it left us unmoved, and we were Frenchmen by birth rather than in heart and soul.

I do not mean, however, to join in the charges levelled of late years at the study of classical authors. To them we owed a taste for the beautiful, a pure appreciation of intellectual excellence, precious natural virtues, the memory of great deeds, an ennobling intimacy with great men and great ages; but we did not climb high enough to reach the roof of the building, which is Jesus Christ, and the friezes of the Parthenon hid from our eyes the dome of St Peter's at Rome.

When I entered the law school at Dijon, I returned to my mother's little hearth, and to the ineffable charm of a small and modest but loving home-circle. There was no superfluity in our house, but severe simplicity, strict economy, an atmosphere of an age far removed from our own, and the sacredness which attached to the virtues of a widow who saw her four children around her already growing to manhood and fostered a hope that she might leave behind her a generation of honourable and perhaps distinguished men. But a cloud of sadness would overcast that dear woman's heart at the thought that she had not a single Christian at her side, and that not one of her children could accompany her to the sacred mysteries of her religion.

Happily, among the two hundred students who attended the law school were nine or ten whose minds looked further than the civil code, who aspired to something higher than deeds and briefs, to whom the service of their country, the

study of oratory, the pursuit of fame, the practice of the civic virtues, were stronger incentives than the chances of vulgar fortune. These men quickly got to know one another by that strange secret sympathy which, while it brings vice into touch with vice and mediocrity with mediocrity, links together also spirits of a higher caste, who are inspired by nobler aims. Nearly all those young fellows owed to Christianity the excellence of their natures. Although I did not share their faith, they wished to treat me as one of themselves; and soon the meetings we held and the long walks we took together brought us face to face with high questions of philosophy, politics and religion. I neglected the study of positive law, for I was attracted by intellectual problems of a much higher order; and I made but a poor law-student, just as I had made but a poor scholar at college.

When I had done my law, my mother, in spite of her narrow means, resolved to send me to qualify for the Paris bar. She was urged by a mother's ambition for my success; but God had a different purpose, and, without knowing it, she was setting me on the road to salvation.

I was not attracted by Paris. I had been accustomed to a life of hard work, and had acquired regular and steady habits; and I lived there as I had lived at Dijon—with this sad difference, that I no longer had either fellow-students or friends around me, but found myself in utter loneliness, with no one to care about me. Hence my soul was thrown back upon itself, and found there neither God nor any religious principle, but only the pride which springs from ambition.

M. Riambourg, one of the Presidents of the Royal Court of Dijon, sent me to M. Guillemin, avocat au conseil. I worked in his chambers patiently and ardently, sometimes practising at the bar. I also joined a society of young men called *des Bonnes Etudes*. It was both royalist and Catholic, and on either ground I was out of sympathy with them. An unbeliever from my college days, I became a liberal when I attended the Law Schools, although my mother was devoted to the Bourbons, and had had me christened Henri after Henri IV, the chief idol of her political faith. But all the rest of my family were liberals. I myself instinctively became so, and no sooner did the echo of politics strike upon my ear than I became a child of my generation in love for liberty, as I already was in my ignorance of God and the Gospel. It was M. Guillemin, my chief, who urged me to join the *Bonnes Etudes*, trusting that I should there abandon opinions which were not his own. But he was wrong. No ray of light reached me from there; I found no friendship there either. I lived poor and lonely, twenty years old, given up to private work, with no outward interests, no pleasant companionship or connection, no attraction for the world or its ways, no delight in the theatre, no object of passion of which I was conscious, save indeed a weak and vague hankering after fame. A few successes at the assize-court alone roused me a little, without, however, giving any fresh direction to my mind.

It was while I was in this state of loneliness and desolation that God came to rescue me. He made use neither of any book nor of any man in my regard. The same M. Riambourg who had

sent me to M. Guillemin had also introduced me to the Abbé Gerbet, a young friend of the most illustrious ecclesiastic of that day. But nothing came of it. Nothing came either of a visit I paid to a gloomy chamber in the Bureaux de la Grande Aumônerie, where I saw the Abbé de la Mennais. His appearance and his conversation only aroused my curiosity. Neither did any preacher of Christianity win my attention; M. Fraysinnous was then nothing more than Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, and no preacher of mark had taken his place in the pulpits of the capital.

After eighteen months I was as lonely as I had been the very first day, aloof from every party, with no stream of interest to carry me along, no influence to cheer my spirits, no friendship to sustain me, no home to gladden me in the morning with the thought of the joys of the evening. No doubt, I had much to suffer from such utter and such cruel loneliness; but it was part of God's purpose in my regard. I toiled painfully through the desert of youth, without knowing that it would have its Sinai, its flash of lightning, its living waters from the rock.

I cannot tell at what day or hour or by what means the faith, which I had lost ten years before, was restored in my heart like the flame of a torch which had never quite gone out. Theology teaches us that there is a light other than that of reason, an impulse other than those of nature; and that such a light and impulse come from God, and act upon us without our knowing whence they come or whither they go. "The spirit of God," says our Lord in St John's Gospel, "breatheth where he will. . . . Thou

knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth."*

An unbeliever one day, a Christian the next; certain with a certainty which nothing could shake, it was not that I had surrendered my reason, or suffered it suddenly to become enslaved under some strange yoke; on the contrary, it received an enlargement of its lights, a widening of its horizon, a deepening of its insight. Neither had my character suddenly become degraded under a narrow and chilling formalism, but rather its powers were quickened under an influence greater than nature. I had not to renounce all that gave me joy and delight; rather my joy received fulness and ennoblement. The whole *man* remained; there was added only the God who made him.

One who has never known such a moment does not really know what man's life is. A faint shadow of it has passed through his veins with the blood of his ancestors; but the true stream has not welled and pulsed therein. It is the sensible fulfilment of our Lord's words in St John's Gospel: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word; My Father will love him, and He will come to him, and He will make an abode with him."† Those two great endowments of our nature, truth and happiness, pour like a flood into the very centre of our being, begetting and fostering each other therein, shining therein like a mysterious rainbow which tints with its lights all our thoughts, our sentiments, our virtues, our very actions until death itself, which even when seen from afar off is radiant with the light of eternity. Every Christian has had some ex-

* John iii, 8. † John xiv, 23.

perience of such a state, but it is never so vivid and so palpable as on the day of conversion; and therefore might we say of unbelief overcome, what is said of original sin: *Felix culpa!* O happy fault!

After I had become a Christian, the world did not lose its interest in my sight; rather it seemed to expand like my own soul. I learnt to look upon it no longer as a theatre for vain and fleeting ambitions, whether disappointed or realized, but rather as a great man stricken with illness, who had need of relief; as a mountain of woe, heaped up from the united misery of ages past and future; and thenceforth I found no delight to compare with that of devoting myself to its service in God's sight with the Gospel and the Cross of His Son.

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